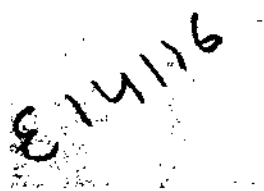

FRENCH WOMEN OF LETTERS:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE,"

&c., &c.

IN TWO VOLS.

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FRENCH WOMEN OF LETTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE faults and merits of Fanni Buttlerd are scarcely literary. Both spring from its truth. Madame Riccoboni gave the public a few pages taken from the book of her youth, and that successful experiment showed her that she possessed a power which she henceforth adapted to the purposes of fiction.

"The Marquis of Cressy," her next work, one of her best, but also of her least pleasing productions, proved her to be mistress in the difficult art of telling a story. She chose the narrative form, and we think that, had she always done so, her characters would have possessed a strength and

depth in which they often fail. This short but tragic story shows us how rapid was the declivity down which fiction descended to that reign of turmoil and passion which we entered with Madame de Tencin. She was satisfied with a love delicate in its manifestations, though violent in its nature, and Fanni Buttlerd's love was both vehement and free; she thought it enough that a woman should die because her passion could not be gratified, and Madame de Cressy takes poison because the man she loves is faithless. This is one of the earliest interesting suicides in the modern French novel. Mademoiselle de Gournay's Alinda, though she wills her own death, dares not achieve it herself. What a change since the days of Clelia, when lovers risked life a thousand times for a look, a smile, a glove, a riband, but had not learnt to prize the relief of a bowl of poison. This was left to the villains of the story, to murder and treason. The pure, the gentle, the good, died innocent as they had lived.

Another characteristic of this story is the hero. He is one of the first bad men made the leading person in a tale. The hero had been amiable, handsome, and true hitherto; Madame Riccoboni showed him to us shorn of the heroic attributes of honour and truth. She was not the first to do so, indeed, but she was one of the earliest. Madame

de la Fayette's inconstant Duke of Guise is a very subordinate character. Mademoiselle de Scudéry's real heroes are all faithful. The Marquis of Cressy stands alone in the tale, a bold, bad, and mercenary man; a real hero, yet brought before us not to be loved, admired, and imitated, but to be hated and despised.

He is well drawn, however, with all the vigour of a portrait. Handsome, fascinating, ambitious, and false, made to please and to deceive; brave, because to be a coward would be degradation; externally prudent and cold with women, because he wishes to marry splendidly; yet eager and impassioned in secret, because beauty and resistance charm him—he is a strange compound of daring wickedness and of shameful meanness. In this he does not belong to the heroic villain of a modern school. We sometimes pity the Marquis of Cressy—we never admire him.

Two good and beautiful women, who only see the fair outside which conceals so much villainy, fall in love with the Marquis of Cressy at the same time. Adelaide de Bugei is noble and poor; Madame du Raisel is a rich widow. The Marquis of Cressy only suspects the preference of the former. She is too poor for ambition, too lovely to be given up without regret. He plays with her affections until his own are somewhat involved.

He hesitates, deliberates, and at length, conquered by her beauty, goodness, and love, he resolves to marry her.

Accident now reveals to him Madame du Raisel's affection, unsuspected till then. The splendour which surrounds this lady doubles her charms in M. de Cressy's eyes, whilst Adelaide's are considerably weakened by her poverty. He really loves her less; but he still likes her well enough, now that she must not be his wife, to attempt making her his mistress; for, as the author sadly tells us, "respect ceases when love ends."

Adelaide, though imprudent, was pure. She flies with horror from her base lover, falls ill with grief, and on her recovery enters a convent. M. de Cressy takes this admirable opportunity of ingratiating himself with the good and artless Madame du Raisel. Pressed to tell the cause of the emotion he betrayed on hearing that Mademoiselle de Bugei was in danger, he confesses that a proud and silent passion for Madame du Raisel made him seek to correspond to Adelaide's affection; but that, on being put to the severe proof of marriage, he preferred being thought an ingrate to giving her a cold, unloving husband. Madame du Raisel is tender and credulous; she believes all, and forgives and marries the sinner.

Her beauty and tenderness secure her husband's love; for there is this weakness in this bad man, that he cannot help loving his victims. But in an evil hour she receives a young orphan girl under her roof. Hortense de Berneil is not handsome, but she is vain and wilful. She rallies M. de Cressy on Adelaide's passion. No man, she declares, could make her enter a convent—not even the most charming of his sex. M. de Cressy is piqued; he takes up the challenge; her resistance and her pride make Hortense lovely in his eyes. He spares no pains to please her, and succeeds. She becomes his mistress, or rather his tyrant. Weary of her hard yoke, he would fain turn back to his neglected wife; but it is too late. The truth has reached Madame de Cressy. She knows that she was married for money, that the husband whom she loved, and the orphan whom she befriended, have conspired to wrong her. For a few days she broods over her grief; then, unable to endure life, she takes poison and dies, forgiving the two offenders.

M. de Cressy lives on: a sad, unhappy man. Two images haunt him to his dying day: Adelaide immured in a convent through him; Madame du Raisel dying in his arms. "He was eminent; he was distinguished; he obtained every honour, every title he had wished for; he

was high and wealthy; but he was not happy."

Thus ends the tale in which, with all his badness, M. de Cressy holds the first rank. His character is the story. In its mixture of good and evil, of strength and weakness, it is admirable. Its very littlenesses are genuine; and when we close the book, we feel that we have seen a true man, perhaps the original of Lord Charles Alfred.

It was not in Madame Riccoboni's power to forget her own fate; and "Juliette Catesby," published the same year with "The Marquis de Cressy," is another tale of man's perfidy and woman's wrongs. It is an epistolary novel, and it takes Lady Juliette a great many letters to tell her story to her friend, Lady Harriet Compley. Yet it is slight and easily told. Lady Juliette—young, lovely, and admired—was left a widow at eighteen. A jealous husband has cured her of marriage, and a faithless mistress has cured Lord Ossery of love. They meet at Lord Ormond's house, and their resolves grow weak. If Lord Ossery had not taken so much time to make up his mind, all would have been well, and there would have been no story; but scarcely has he spoken, scarcely is their marriage agreed on, when he is obliged to take a journey which proves fatal to love. The error of a day, an error in which temptation had more part than infidelity, places him at the mercy

of an injured girl, who threatens to commit suicide unless he saves her from disgrace. Honour bids him forsake Lady Catesby and marry Miss Jenny Montfort; he obeys her call, and without explanation, with nothing but passionate protestations of sorrow and love, he parts from his betrothed and marries her unloved rival. Two years later his wife dies; he is free to seek his injured mistress, explain the past, and be forgiven.

Such is the tale, but it is told differently. We are introduced to Lady Catesby, when, having met Lord Ossery after his wife's death, she flies from him, and refuses to hear his explanations. Her wrongs, and the bitter story of her past love, are developed slowly, and with much skill. The tale has that grace of language and detail which was Madame Riccoboni's excellence, and is often the attribute of minds deficient in invention. The difficulty of having much to say seems to make the necessity of saying that little gracefully all the more binding.

To fly from her penitent lover, Lady Catesby travels with a lady, and her brother, a Sir Henry ——, who is in love with her, who is always dying for her, and who, to her vexation, "never does die." They go visiting from mansion to mansion; and her ladyship, who is not in a good temper, and who has a satirical pen, spares neither

hosts nor guests. Sir John Warthy and his wife find her pitiless. The husband is solemn, stiff, and stupid. Every word he utters is a foolish compliment, and his entertainment is like himself. He has been married six months, and his wife "is young, long, thin, pale, and foolish. With a sulky look, she puts forward a small head, that turns on a slender neck, and she laughs in your face, whilst her own offers no trace of mirth."

The ever-busy Lady Howard, who does not read lest she should hurt her eyesight, who forbids love and promotes marriage on her estates, is a more merciful sketch; but Lord Winchester and his guests rouse all Lady Catesby's taste for satire. Lord Winchester is the victim of the fine arts. "With plenty of voice he sings disagreeably; he dances awkwardly, though his steps are correct; he draws according to rule, paints little screens that are neither ugly nor handsome, and composes detestable verses with great facility. Every day sees the birth of a multitude of couplets and madrigals, where love, Venus, Hebe, and the whole Olympus are to be found *bon gré, mal gré* at the feet of the divinities of the house, and in which one takes on arriving the name bestowed by rhyme or measure."

After Lord Winchester comes the beautiful Countess of Bristol, "who is beautiful from morn-

ing till night, is always in the attitude of a woman sitting for her portrait, thinks of nothing but of looking beautiful, and is ever talking of the effect of beauty." And after her a young and extravagant baronet. "He is tall, a good figure, has beautiful hair, admirable teeth, plenty of wit, little sense, and much slang. He knows nothing, talks on every subject, lies impudently, is a connoisseur in dogs, horses, and jewels; despises everything, honestly admires himself, is ever deciding, wearies people of taste, is first among fools, and is thought here a delightful man."

Love fortunately comes in to stop this merciless pen. Lady Juliette can talk in other accents than those of satirical comment; when unveiling the past and disclosing the sorrows of her love, she does so with delicacy and tenderness. With infinite but subtle and evanescent grace she implies all that this love had of delightful at its dawn, of happy in its progress. How fondly, through all her wrath at having been betrayed, she dwells on the matchless grace, the courtesy, the tenderness of her false lover! How she lingers as she calls back that happy summer spent in Lady Ormond's house and gardens! Slowly she paints the delightful hours when they studied and read together in the shady bowers of that earthly paradise. A love-tale at length unsealed their

hearts, and their mutual passion was confessed.

"Ah! what a moment!" she exclaims, pausing in her story. "A charm unknown till then was shed over all I saw. That garden in which I had just learned that I was beloved seemed the abode of some beneficent being whose hand tore the veil that had concealed happiness from my view! Mute, full of amazement and joy, how could I have concealed emotions so rapid, and experienced for the first time? . . . Ah, why," she adds, a little farther on, "why does the frailty of our hearts and the inconstancy of our wishes turn to bitterness a feeling so delightful? Oh, when two beings love, each of whom has an equal power of bestowing on the other a happiness so great, so true, why must one weary, cease to feel, and surrender the other to eternal regret?"

Lady Catesby's regrets are not eternal. She forgives her erring lover, and she is the only one of Madame Riccoboni's betrayed heroines who can do so with honour. Hence a softness, a charm, which the bitter indignation of Fanni Buttlerd, and the calculating villainy of M. de Cressy, made impossible.

In her next tale, "Ernestine," which La Harpe called her gem, Madame Riccoboni chose two delightful characters, both frank, noble, generous, and true; both made to avenge love against

society, and those laws of ambition and pride which had been so fatal to her own happiness.

M. de Clémengis has left his portrait to be copied at M. Duménil's, a miniature-painter. He calls for it, and finds a lovely, fair-haired, dark-eyed girl of sixteen engaged in finishing the copy. Recognizing in him the original, she coolly avails herself of his presence to perfect the likeness.

Her frankness, her vivacity, her calm innocence affect him; he inquires into her story; it is sad and short. Ernestine is the orphan child of an unknown mother. A kind French lady reared her, and, before her death, placed her with M. Duménil to learn miniature-painting. His health is failing, his sister Henriette, Ernestine's faithful friend, is away, and Madame Duménil, a light and unprincipled young woman, is the orphan girl's only guardian when the tale opens.

M. de Clémengis is seized with a sudden wish of learning miniature-painting. M. Duménil is too ill to attend to him; the duty devolves on Ernestine. For once M. de Clémengis finds a woman who cares nothing for his title, his name, and his uncle the minister; who loves him, too, and he knows it—though she does not—with simple girlish affection. He, too, loves her, and yet

he does not mean to marry her; his prejudices, his poverty, forbid the thought; but neither does he for a moment cherish unworthy designs. We may ask why he indulges himself in the dangerous delight of her presence; but when we find a marquis of the *ancien régime* with feelings so refined and so disinterested, we must not be too exacting.

M. Duménil dies, and his widow, bribed by the Marquis, fabricates a story of sudden wealth, in which Ernestine believes. The young girl is removed to a charming country-house; teachers impart to her every accomplishment; she exchanges her plain attire for elegant and fashionable apparel, and leads a free, happy, and delightful life.

M. de Clémengis sees his young and happy mistress in the home his secret generosity has provided. He sees her daily; every look, every word of the ingenuous girl betrays her secret affection; but this delicate lover takes no ungenerous advantage. Happy to be loved, happy to love, happy in her presence and society, he lets the present go by and gives the future no thought.

The same happy intimacy continues in Paris during the winter. But Ernestine suddenly meets her old friend, Mademoiselle Duménil, and the charm is broken. She learns that she passes for M. de Clémengis's mistress. Her tears, her protests, convince Henriette of her innocence, but not

of the purity of M. de. Clémengis's intentions. He is sent for, and confesses that he had none beyond making Ernestine happy. He is further than ever from making her his mistress, but no nearer than ever to making her his wife.

Up to this the story is delightful. There is something lovely, young, and ideal in that innocent passion which, without hope or thought of the future, binds an accomplished gentleman and a frank, innocent girl. No vision of marriage, nothing of the actual matter-of-fact side of human passion, comes to disturb that charming picture. They love, and never talk of love: one because she knows not even what passes in her own heart; the other because to see and hear the loved one is joy sufficient. If Ernestine had felt agitated in the presence of her lover, if even that lover had found it a hard task to struggle against his passion, the charm of innocence would have vanished from their story.

Now that they are mutually enlightened, much of that charm departs. Mademoiselle Duménil thinks so highly of the Marquis that she allows Ernestine to keep his gifts, and receive occasional visits from him in the *parloir* of the convent to which she has retired; but ignorance has fled, and with her security and trust. Ernestine once had no wishes, no hopes, for she knew not that she

loved. She knows it now, and that her love is hopeless. M. de Clémengis is miserable, he sees her seldom; why feed a passion which to both can bring nothing save sorrow? He could marry Ernestine indeed, brave his uncle's displeasure, the world's censure, and lose all for love. But he is not sure of his own heart. He has not tried poverty, he cannot tell how the inglorious inaction to which she condemned a gentleman of the *ancien régime* would suit his proud temper. He might be unhappy and embittered, and make Ernestine herself miserable. Reason, generosity, command him to forget her; but he cannot obey them entirely, and now comes the struggle of passion.

Ernestine receives M. de Clémengis's visits in the country-house she owes to his generosity, but her friend, Madame de Ranci, never leaves her. M. de Clémengis is irritated and offended. "Do you mistrust me?" he asks. "Ah! what coldness! what reserve! Your friendship is not so tender as it once was. Ah! where is the time, the happy time, when, in this very spot, you ran to meet me with a joy so true, when your arm leant on mine, and we wandered together through these alleys you liked so well?"

These reproaches, his altered looks, his feverish agitation, move and alarm Ernestine. She sees that the passion which once made him so calmly

happy has become his torment. She writes to him, and her letter is very beautiful. It is a mixture of frankness, generosity, and girlish art, but the art of a fine nature. By throwing herself on the generosity of so romantic a lover, Ernestine knows well that she secures her honour. "Alas!" she says to him, "by what fatality does your happiness now seem to depend on the folly of a girl whom you formerly respected? Be judge in your own cause, in hers, too, and pronounce between your own heart and mine.

"My reserve wounds you! Ah, monsieur, can I treat you with a familiarity which my ignorance excused? For a long time I ventured to look upon you as on a beloved brother. The extreme difference between your rank and mine did not strike me. In that happy time nothing checked the proofs of my innocent affection. I am not altered; ah, why will you persist in thinking that I am? It is not you I fear, monsieur, but myself. I am young, I owe you all, I love you. Yes, monsieur, I love you—I say, I repeat it with joy, I am not ashamed of loving you. . . . . .

"And now, I submit to your decision. If, to save your life, I must become contemptible, renounce my principles, my own esteem, and yours perhaps, speak—I do not hesitate between a stake so dear and all I can call mine. Decide, monsieur,

on the fate of a girl ready to give up all to your happiness; but before you accept so great a sacrifice, allow me to restore your gifts: to keep and enjoy them would authorize the belief that you enriched me to ruin me. *Let us save at least your honour, and something of mine;* may the baseness of having received the price of my innocence never be imputed to me! On these conditions, monsieur, the unhappy Ernestine will follow the line of conduct your answer will prescribe."

Only a young, generous, imprudent girl could write such a letter—so noble, so reproachful in its very generosity, so youthful in its daring. And with this sad proof of love, which M. de Clémengis is too generous not to reject with grief at having ever suggested it, the tale should end. Here sacrificing birth and pride, he should either marry the noble girl who could remind him so pathetically of all that honour holds dear; or, bending beneath the yoke of the world, he should, still generous in his renunciation, turn from her, and leave to time and reason to heal the inevitable wound.

By prolonging the story, Madame Riccoboni has done much to spoil it.

Conscious that he has tried her love and his own virtue too far, M. de Clémengis comes no more. He submits to his uncle's wishes, and prepares to

marry his long-destined though unknown bride; but the uncle is exiled—the match is broken off. M. de Clémengis falls ill, and Ernestine flies to his sick bed. Love prevails over prejudice and pride; and the gain of a pending lawsuit, the restoration to royal favour of his uncle, do not affect his resolve. The world may say what it pleases, Ernestine becomes Marquise de Clémengis. No doubt we are pleased it should be thus. Let love always be blest in books; but in a tale where the interest lay not in incident, but in the struggle to which passion, temptation, and pride exposed two fine natures, that struggle could not remain too much the centre of all attention. When we cease to wonder what M. de Clémengis will do, or Ernestine sacrifice, we lose some of our interest in either. Incidents only divert us from one of the most charming groups Madame Riccoboni ever drew.

She excelled in such pictures: in love happy or forsaken; in honour and generous faith prevailing over looseness. She was not successful in wider flights; and her two longest stories, "Miss Jenny" and "Sophie de Vallière," are the weakest she wrote. Yet both possess, pre-eminently, that meaning which pervaded all her works—the sorrows of woman. As a girl, seduced and betrayed; as a wife, neglected and unloved; as an actress,

sought for her beauty with insulting homage; sneered at as a writer, till she conquered success, but wronged till she wearied of her honourable attempt to earn a livelihood—she knew better than any how hard a lot that of a woman without friends or money can be made by man.

Her resentment of the injury did not take the shape of foresight. She seems to have known of no remedy save more justice, virtue, and self-denial in man's bearing to woman. With pitiless but useless logic she protested against the wrong; with unwearied zeal she warned women against that voice of flattery and passion which had been the ruin of her youth. "Miss Jenny," which she took three years to write, is, from the melancholy birth of the heroine to the sacrifice of her happiness—with which the tale closes—ere she reaches her twentieth year, an instance of almost every sorrow that can befall her sex. She is an orphan, disowned and penniless. She marries the man she does not love, and he has another wife living; and she is obliged to fly from the man she loves, for he is betrothed to her friend.

The false marriage was a favourite incident when Madame Riccoboni wrote. It has been exhausted since then; and even bigamy, the crime of modern days, has been considered out of place in fiction. There is, perhaps, something too

harrowing and too sad in that trap laid by profligacy to virtue and innocence. Its success is what condemns it. We hate the triumph of the false, the evil, and the corrupt; we want to feel the earth secure and firm beneath the feet of the good. Let every sorrow darken around them, but let not the sting reach their very heart, and evil might conquer them in their last stronghold.

Melancholy, and often tragic, are the incidents recorded in this tale, in its episodes, and in the letters of Sophie de Vallière, or of the Countess of Sancerre. But the more she had to say, to enter life and its depths, and the less Madame Riccoboni was successful. The slight, gay, graceful passages in these tales are by far the best. There is a scene in "Sophie de Vallière" which is very good. Sophie reaches her seventeenth year without suspecting that she is not the niece of Madame d'Auterive. That lady dies, and the family assembles to hear the reading of the will. The supposed niece and heiress, the flattered and caressed mistress of future wealth, is surrounded by her affectionate relatives. What sympathy, what tenderness, is shewn by cousins and aunts! The haughty Madame de Germeuil, who has long courted the hand of Sophie for her son, is particularly attentive. But, alas! instead of the will is found a packet of letters and papers, which disclose Sophie's real

history. Madame de Germeuil is horrified; the whole family is indignant and injured, and withdraws from the little imposter. True, she is no heiress; true, this stranger will not deprive them of their due; but can they forget that for seventeen years they have been her servile flatterers? Can they forget the secret jealousy, the degrading meannesses, which the foolish fondness of her protectress inflicted? They cannot; and now that their hour is come, they avenge, in one moment of triumph and insult, the baseness of a lifetime. Sophie faints with dismay and grief, and Madame de Germeuil has a violent quarrel with the other heirs.

Madame Riccoboni wrote till within a few years of her death. Her last works prove some decay of power, and an unfortunate imitation of bad models. Yet, as an imitator, Madame Riccoboni ranks high. Sainte-Foix maintained in her presence that Marivaux's style was inimitable; she supported the contrary opinion, and amused herself with continuing Marivaux's never-finished "Marianne." A manuscript, said to have been stolen from Marivaux, was read to Sainte-Foix. He was completely deceived; and well he might. The imitation is perfect, and shows wonderful tact and *finesse*. Madame Riccoboni called this a folly of her youth. It is a graceful *jeu d'esprit*, but,

unfortunately, leaves "Marianne" as unfinished as ever.

The letters of Lord Rivers is the last production of this agreeable writer we shall examine. As a delicate though slight critique of cotemporary foibles and illusions, these letters are charming. The story is but a thread, on which the author's opinions are strung.

A young and lovely ward, a handsome guardian, and officious friends, are the *dramatis personæ*. Lord Rivers, after being humbled by one haughty beauty, and deceived by another, finds a soothing charm in the society of his ward, Miss Rutland. Honour forbids him to yield to his feelings, for before he was conscious that she was the very person who ought to become Lady Rivers, he had advocated the claims of his friend, Sir Edmund ——. Pique at his coldness makes her encourage this suitor, whom love will not let her marry. Hence the endless caprices of her whom Lord Rivers defines as "this pretty, strange, incomprehensible creature, whose real character escapes one just as one thinks to lay hold of it."

Lord Rivers has indeed some suspicion that he is the cause of her caprices, but he is too dull and shy to act on the suspicion; he keeps away until the plainer revelations of a mutual friend bring him, penitent and happy, to the feet of his fair mistress.

Out of this slight tale Mrs. Inchbald seems to have extracted the first part of her "Simple Story," in which she put as much passion as Madame Riccoboni put little.

Lord Rivers's remarks on France, her people, and her manners, are more entertaining than his cold love for Miss Rutland. He finds philanthropy all the rage, and that love of mankind, of which the French Revolution was the sanguinary close, in all its fervour. With this universal tenderness Lord Rivers quarrels. To love all men, he sceptically declares, means to love none; and under the name of Sir Henry Montford, his uncle, he sketches the father of the famous Mirabeau, that *ami des hommes*, who drove his wife from his home, insulted her children and his by the presence of his mistress in his own house, and by his brutal tyranny did much to exasperate and corrupt a son who, with all his vices, was infinitely above his philanthropic father. To cotemporaries the portrait must have appeared a very mild one.

"One evening his cries and a terrible noise made me run to his study. I saw him, his cane in his hand, chasing a very pretty negro boy, whose gentleness and innocence had endeared him to me. I saved the child from his master's fury, and asked to know the crime that drew down on him this heavy chastisement. He had involun-

tarily spilt a little water on the papers of the indefatigable writer! 'And what did these precious papers treat of?' I inquired of my irritated relative. 'They treat of the happiness of a portion of mankind,' he answered, warmly; 'it is the work of my feelings, the favourite work of my heart, dictated by the tenderest humanity; in that work I demonstrate the cruelty of our planters, the injustice of Europeans, who, not satisfied with encouraging an infamous traffic, with profiting by it, assume the barbarous right of ill-using unfortunate slaves whose labours enrich them. Full of compassion for these unfortunate negroes——'

"'If I were you, uncle,' I interrupted, 'I would begin by proving my pity in not ill-using the only negro whose fate is dependent upon me.'

"You will never value this advice so highly as did the protector of the blacks. He deprived me of fifteen thousand pounds sterling, which he was to leave me at his death, and gave them to my sister. If he thought to punish me he was greatly mistaken."

If Lord Rivers was thus disgusted with mock philanthropists, one of his correspondents, Lady Cardigan, was no less offended with the lachrymose tone of cotemporary authors.

"I have long been weary of our *very feeling* novelists," writes this lady. "They want to move,

to agitate, to excite cries and lamentations. They invent pitiful misfortunes, they press, they accumulate them on a wretched hero. They load him with them, and they succeed in revolting, without having found the way to interest us.

"But what will lead me, I believe, to cease reading for ever, is the mania common to writers of every sort and nation—it is that rage for virtue which excites in them transports bordering on madness. What! cannot they write ten lines without exclaiming, oh, goodness! oh, charity! oh, humanity! oh, virtue!"

More particular in its kind is Lord Rivers's account of the thinking mania which had then seized France, a mania of which Madame Riccoboni did not attack the substance, but the affectation. It was in the seventeenth century that France really thought, but in the loose, profligate, cynical eighteenth century she talked about thinking. It was the froth and foam, too often impure, of the broad stream which had flowed so majestic and so deep in the age of Pascal and Bossuet.

"The French are now as dull and as heavy as we are," writes Lord Rivers, to Sir Charles Cardigan. "They are thinkers, politicians, and reasoners. Agriculture, legislation, and philosophy are the subjects of discourse in the most polished circles. Every one projects, lays down principles,

and forms plans for administration. Women even take up these grave matters. Party spirit slips in at the toilet, and mixes in every pleasure. A young beauty chooses and protects a political system, prescribes the rest, argues, and sometimes loses her temper. Every circle has its views, its ideas, and plans. Woe to the peaceable citizen who remains neuter, listens, and holds his peace. Everywhere he is deafened with noise, nowhere is he esteemed.

"Depth has become the mania of a people formerly inspired by the graces and guided by pleasure. The sort of dissipation to which you invite me to yield, and which you think calculated to charm *ennui* away, exists no more. The theatres are very sad, I assure you; there is weeping in every house. Enveloped in gloomy veils, Thalia has put by her smiling mask. The brightness of mirth is hated here; it is the lot of the people and of foolish youth. Feeling—*extreme feeling*—is the universal mania, and our darkest subjects are scarcely considered grave enough for burlesque operas."

And here we end with Madame Riccoboni. She belonged to a school which shows no symptoms of reviving; the calm, the correct, and somewhat cold school of graceful writing and true though limited observation. Her tales can

still be read with pleasure and profit. There is indelicacy in "Fanni Buttlerd," and even her most moral stories are not free from much that would never have been written by Madame de la Fayette or Mademoiselle de Scudéry. But it was the taint of the age, not want of modesty or refinement, that made Madame Riccoboni occasionally fall into those errors. Her mind was naturally noble and pure, and like it was her teaching. In "Fanni Buttlerd" alone there is a deliberate want of innocence and principle, and only the coarseness of cotemporary literature can have induced Madame Riccoboni to publish it, and made her overlook its deficiencies.

In a literary point of view Madame Riccoboni still ranks high. She had not genius, she had not that magic of a fine style which can make novels survive the changes of fashion; but she had many gifts and a place of her own. She was more natural than Marivaux, more delicate than Prévost, and she stands between them, popular and admired in her own day, honourably remembered in ours.

Her influence was delightful and beneficial, and success rewarded the efforts of this thoroughly conscientious writer. No tale ever left her hands until her power to improve was exhausted. She wrote slowly and with care; her style was lively

and delicate—graceful and ingenious thoughts flowed freely from her pen; her stories were well told and interesting; her characters failed in depth, but they had truth and clearness. They are still very definite persons—too perfect, too judicious sometimes, but yet real and living. Her women especially are excellently drawn; without the aid of graphic description, without telling us the height of their figure or the colour of their hair, she gives them an air of beauty, elegance, and breeding we cannot easily forget. They are all ladies—if not in birth, at least in feeling—from that too vehement and too frank Fanni, the betrayed mistress of Lord Charles, to the generous Ernestine, so tenderly loved by that truest of lovers, M. de Clémengis.

What affinity was there between those graceful creatures, so polite, so refined, so accomplished, and the Marquises and Comtesses whom Marie de Mézières met in her youth as an equal, and as an actress afterwards represented on the stage? Alas, not much! She took the graceful wit, the charming manners, the lovely form, and she poured within a purer spirit and a nobler soul than the reality can have afforded to her penetrating view.

What matter? The writers of memoirs and autobiographies have shown us more than was

needed of the other side of the picture. Impurity, coarseness, profligacy, under its worst aspect, have been unveiled with a freedom that seemed meant to reconcile future generations to their own vices. It was well, therefore, that a delicate pen should idealize this lamentable history; that readers should share the sorrows and pride of Lady Juliette, and linger with her over the first joys of her happy love in the Lady Ormond's gardens; it was right that the noble imprudence of Ernestine, the sensitive reserve of Sophie de Vallière, the vivacity and haughtiness of Miss Rutland, should point to other shades in the female character than those which require merciful oblivion. And though Madame Riccoboni was less successful and less lenient with her men—though she showed herself either too severe, or, when she chose to be indulgent, somewhat less discriminating than in her portraiture of women—still some of her lovers, alternately impassioned, selfish, and devoted, and, whatever they are, always courteous, well-bred, polished French noblemen of the last age, are worthy of attention. Like her women, they leave us an impression of a refinement monotonous, perhaps, but intellectual and delicate, which has perished in revolutionary tempests, or vanished in the struggles of active and political life. Her tales have not that neatness, her cha-

racters that point and epigram, which gave Marmontel such amazing success in his day; but her sketches of society are more valuable than his, and give a truer reflex of that delightful society which Madame de Genlis so indignantly declared that Marmontel slandered instead of painting.

Her good taste, and that intuitive knowledge of manners which guides a woman so much more safely than man through the minutiæ of life, and which, even when her mind and education are inferior to his, saves her from so many errors into which he falls, did not allow Madame Riccoboni to draw those amazing chevaliers and insolent beauties with which this prolific and popular author adorned his tales. Truer and more delicate, but less lively than the cotemporary authors of that age, she never sacrificed to effect, and indulged herself in a simplicity which, though ever delightful to a correct taste, is, as a matter of literary speculation, safe only to genius. It is to Madame Riccoboni's honour that to such speculation she would not stoop, and kept her dignity and her self-respect pure and free.

CHAPTER II.

MADAME DE GENLIS.

THE name of Madame de Staël alone enjoyed a more European celebrity than that of Madame de Genlis at the close of the eighteenth century. This age has drawn between the two writers that broad and deep distinction which must ever exist between talent and genius; but this was by no means so universally acknowledged, nor yet so evident a truth, when both wrote—one in the maturity of experience, the other in the glow of youth and inspiration.

The superiority of Madame de Staël was at length recognized; injudicious comparison was no longer made between women whom nature had never intended to be rivals; but a charm remained with the name of Madame de Genlis, a fascination to which Madame de Staël could lay no claim.

One had written for youth, for the happy and joyous years when books are a passion, and a new tale is an event. The respect, the reverence, and the love of a generation long guarded her against forgetfulness and reproach. Mild, grave, and pleasing, a moral and lady-like instructor, she long appeared to those who, having learned to love her in their childhood, could not at once unlearn the lesson, and reject the formerly welcome teaching. But truth is inexorable. Whether she merited it or not, it became apparent that this favourite writer had not left a stainless reputation. History showed a Madame de Genlis who was not merely the governess of Princes and the teacher of youth, but a gay, lively, and very handsome woman of fashion, fond of pleasure, fond of admiration, suspected of a doubtful connexion with that unhappy Prince who afterwards bore the name of Philippe Egalité, and who, whether slander wronged her or not, was certainly one of the most witty, agreeable, and accomplished women of her time, and also, on her own confession, one of the least decorous.

Under these two very different aspects, as an admirable educator, or as the profligate mistress of a corrupt Prince, Madame de Genlis now seems condemned to appear for ever—innocent or guilty, such is her fate. As an author, she has a

wide-spread name, but who reads her books? And yet she wrote with taste and elegance. Charming and ingenious thoughts are scattered throughout her pages with graceful profusion. She wrote novels that had great success in their day, novels of passion, by no means written for youth, and which are eminent for some of the first qualities of fiction; strong character, knowledge of the world, of the human heart, interest and invention. To those who read again those charming pages, scarcely now and then disfigured by the extreme sensibility of the age, it seems unaccountable that such a book as "Rash Vows," for instance, should be forgotten. And yet there is good and logical reason for it. We have already said that Madame de Genlis has two characters: one good, as the teacher of youth; one bad, as the mistress of a Prince; it is unfortunately true that her good character has injured her literary reputation. No one would venture to say that a badly-conducted woman could not write admirable works of fiction; but few would dispute that sweeping judgment of superficial readers, that it is impossible for a governess, and the writer of moral works destined for the young, to write anything but a dull novel. Until her books on education and for children are forgotten, Madame de Genlis can have no justice as a novel-

ist; and by that time, alas! where will she—where will some of the brightest of her successors be? Going down the stream of that envious flood of oblivion, which daily bears away from earth and her shores the hopes, the ambition, the painful labours of past generations.

Mademoiselle de Saint Aubin was born at Champceri, near Autun, in Burgundy, on the 25th of January, 1746. Her parents were noble; her father's name was Ducrest, but when his daughter was still a child he bought the Marquisate of Saint Aubin, and as was then customary amongst the French *noblesse*, he assumed the name and title of his estate. His daughter became Countess of Bourbon Lancy in the following manner. The Marquis of Saint Aubin was also Seigneur of the village of Bourbon Lancy; he caused his little girl, then six years of age, to be received a Canoness in the Chapter of Aix, near Lyons, and thus secured to her the title of Countess, the right of being called Madame, and the prospect of a safe and honourable home; if, not being very rich, though of noble birth, she could not marry suitably to her rank. This foresight was not unjustified by the event. The château of Saint Aubin was half a ruin, a real Radcliffian abode, with stately courts and crumbling towers, which their owner could not

afford to keep in repair. In this ancient mansion Stéphanie received a half-pious, half-heathen education. Her governess was devout, ignorant, and a good musician. Her mother was literary; she wrote some novels, now forgotten, and she liked private theatricals. Mademoiselle de Mars helped to develope that remarkable talent for music which always distinguished Madame de Genlis, and Madame de Saint Aubin cultivated that taste for acting for which her daughter was also eminent. She was a pretty child, and the part and costume of Love were found to suit her charmingly. She appeared in a pink skirt, covered with lace and flowers, and reaching to the knee, buskins of pale yellow and silver, flowing hair, and a pair of blue wings. Madame de Saint Aubin was so pleased with this attire, that she would not let the child leave it off. Accordingly, several suits were made for Love—a plain one for week-days, and a handsome one for Sundays—and Mademoiselle de Saint Aubin went out, and walked in her pink skirt, with her blue wings, and quiver, bow and arrows, like any little heathen god. But one concession was made to decorum—Stéphanie's wings were taken off, and a loose cloak was thrown over her childish person, when she accompanied her mother to the parish church. Whilst Mademoiselle de Mars, the governess, taught her pupil

music and religion—and she appears to have been a sincerly pious and amiable person—and Madame de Saint Aubin showed her how to use and prize beauty, Monsieur de Saint Aubin, who was something of a *savant*, and had his own fancies on education, did his best to make his daughter a strong-minded woman. She had a natural horror of insects—he accordingly compelled her to handle spiders and toads, and having taught her this self-subjection, he remained satisfied.

Through all this contradictory teaching the child's instincts made out their own way. She read Mademoiselle de Scudéry's "Clélie," and, not knowing how to write, dictated novels and comedies to her governess; but, most characteristic of all, she turned teacher herself, and, escaping from her room by her window—a rope helped her to slide down to a terrace—she gathered below a school of peasant boys, and taught them their catechism, and such fragments of verse as her tenacious memory had caught.

Before she was thirteen, an abrupt end was put to this desultory education. The estate of Saint Aubin was sold—the Marquis, once more plain M. Ducrest, went off to the colonies, there to begin life anew—and Madame Ducrest and her daughter, reduced to an income of twelve hundred francs a year, went to Paris, where they saw

good company, but lived in a very humble way.

Their new circumstances were not favourable to dignity. Mademoiselle Ducrest was lively, pretty, and poor; she was taught to make every use of her natural advantages, and especially to please the rich. The task was easy enough to an amiable and pliant girl. Her musical talent was of the highest order; she cultivated it with creditable energy and perseverance. Kind friends assisted her studies. After her father's departure, her mother became, for some time, the guest of M. de la Popelinière, near Paris. He was one of the wealthiest and most generous financiers of the day. Mademoiselle Ducrest was soon far in his good graces. He had her taught music, declamation, and dancing, and he sighed to think that he was sixty-six, and that this pretty creature, with luxuriant brown hair, fine black eyes, a nose like Roxelane's, and a most piquant face, was only thirteen. "Quel dommage!" he often said aloud; and Stéphanie, who admired him, who was grateful for his kindness, and not indifferent to his wealth, also thought, though she did not say so, "Quel dommage!"

His house was not the only one in which Mademoiselle Ducrest displayed her charms and her talents. She had acquired considerable skill on the harp, then a fashionable instrument, and which

few excelled in; she sang well; she was an excellent actress; she danced admirably; and, whatever she did, was grateful to ear or eye. She does not acknowledge the fact in her memoirs, but it is asserted that her exertions were liberally remunerated by the wealthy friends whom she and her mother visited. She got several offers of marriage, but either the lover was too old and morose, or he was not sufficiently rich and well-born—for she acknowledges that she was ambitious; and she had reached her seventeenth year before she became the wife of M. de Genlis, a younger brother, but the nephew of a minister, and on the way to those honours and places to which every clever French nobleman could then aspire.

M. Ducrest was returning from the French colony of Saint Domingue, when the English captured the vessel in which he was a passenger. In the English town to which he was taken, he found a young French naval officer, a prisoner like himself, with whom he soon became intimate. He showed him his daughter's portrait, and the letters of his wife full of that daughter's praises. M. de Genlis was fascinated, and, like Colonel Hutchinson, he fell in love with an unknown mistress. No sooner did he win his liberty, and reach Paris, than he called on his friend's wife and daughter. Mademoiselle Ducrest was too pretty and too

amiable not to keep the heart she had already won. M. de Genlis was twenty-seven; his father and mother were long dead; but, though he was legally free, his family was ambitious and powerful; he did not venture to declare his intentions openly —he married Mademoiselle Ducrest, at midnight, in the church of her parish, and the next day he acknowledged his marriage, and was forbidden to appear before his incensed relatives. Their resentment lasted years; yet the end proved that ambition had not deceived Mademoiselle Ducrest; and though her husband had only a few thousand livres income, that sum was then a competency, and, joined to his rank and the protection of his family, would have easily procured M. de Genlis a noble and well-portioned wife, had not love proved stronger than prudence.

Madame de Genlis says little of her husband; that little is to his advantage, but gives no clue to her own feelings. She probably found in him a husband who gratified her two strong passions—vanity and ambition. Had she been merely ambitious, she would have accepted Baron d'Andlau's offer. He was old, rich, and so noble that, as an irresistible preface to his addresses, he sent her his pedigree to examine: but she found him too old and too austere, and the Baron, offended at her want of taste, ultimately married her mother; for

though M. Ducrest returned to France, he did not live to see his daughter become the wife of his young friend. M. de Genlis, on the contrary, was noble, young, and handsome; he was brave, agreeable, and clever; in short, such a man as a girl of seventeen, poor and pretty, might be proud to subdue, and might marry without love. Nothing like tenderness ever pierces through her language when speaking of him; and, on her own confession, vanity, and a wish for admiration, were almost the only mobiles of all her actions. She practised twelve hours a day to become a great musician, and be known as such; she performed daring actions to be thought courageous; she swallowed a live fish to prove that she was not dainty; she rode off alone in a wood, and purposely lost her way, to meet with strange adventures, and, we suspect, to distract her friends with apprehensions. She seems to have been pursued throughout with an unquiet wish for celebrity and singularity, that took the strangest forms—less strange then, it is true, than they would be now. Once she and her mother dressed like peasant women, and went off to a country wedding, and danced with the peasants. Another time, the Bal des Porcherons, in Paris, was the resort she and her friends chose for pleasure; and there Madame de Genlis had the honour of being partner to M. de Brancas's runner.

When her husband joined his regiment, and left her in a convent, soon after their marriage, the young bride could devise no better amusement in this sacred retreat than to enter the cells of the aged nuns and rouge and patch them for matins. Youth, indeed, is the season when levity has most claim on indulgence; but then it must offer something more than a cold heart and a restless brain for its follies to be forgiven. It is the heroic time of life; the time for generous hopes and aims, for self-forgetfulness and general charity; and, imperfect though its deeds ever are, it is so sincere, so genuine, that severity rarely visits its shortcomings.

But this forgiveness is granted on one condition —youth must not be selfish. Madame de Genlis was amiable, but she was not generous, in the broad sense of the word. The ardour of her youth was essentially self-seeking. She was fond of talking alone, of throwing herself into imaginary perils and adventures, and of fashioning herself a life more picturesque than the real one. Imagination can, indeed, find her delight in such fancies, and youth will always have them, whether dreamt or spoken; but it is strange friendship that finds it pleasanter to hold imaginary intercourse than to exchange thought and feeling in real speech and presence with a loved friend. "What real

friend," frankly asks Madame de Genlis, "could enter into our feelings, love and understand us so well, as the one whom one causes to speak—oneself?" None, assuredly; but other dreamers have fancied that friendship, that every human affection, was meant to give as well as to receive, and that it was almost sweeter to love than to be loved. This active mind had, however, its favourable aspect. Madame de Genlis's musical education was attended to; but though her mother was an authoress, she was left in great literary ignorance, and the large amount of information on every subject which she acquired she owed to her own industry. She read and studied prodigiously. Nothing came amiss to her, not even bleeding and anatomy; though she would not study this, it is true, on real corpses, but on the wax figures which Mademoiselle Biron, her teacher, had for that purpose.

She had always had much taste for theatrical amusements. She was ingenious in contriving *fêtes* and *divertissements*, in writing complimentary poetry, and in all those *talents de societé* which then made men and women popular. She could dance as a shepherdess, sing as a Roxelane, and act a ready and graceful part in all the childish, and often *impromptu* contrivances which formed the delight of an idle and decaying aristocracy.

The birth of her children, the interest she took in their education, and the pleasure she found in making them excel in her favourite pursuits, suggested her first work, "Le Théâtre d'Education." It appeared whilst she was in the Palais Royal; for as early as the year 1770, Madame de Genlis had taken a step that influenced her whole life. She had become a member of the gay little Court of the Orleans family, and was attached to the person of the young Duchess of Chartres, one of whose dearest friends she soon became.

The Palais Royal was then in all its splendour and gaiety. The Duke of Orleans, who had privately married Madame de Genlis's aunt, the Marchioness of Montesson, was old, but fond of pleasure; his son, the Duke of Chartres, was devoted to it, and the young Duchess, though a princess of undoubted virtue and piety, did not lead a retired life. The whole family adopted a policy, traditionary in their race, of opposing a popular and affable bearing to the formality of Versailles.

The literary turn of Madame de Genlis would have met with little favour in the circle of Marie Antoinette, for it was one of that unhappy queen's misfortunes not to appreciate the extraordinary power which literature then possessed in France; but it was welcome in the Palais Royal, and even

before it was publicly displayed it was considered as giving additional lustre to that little Court. The plays which Madame de Genlis wrote for her children, and in which they acted, had great and merited success. She did not publish them at once; and when she took this step, it was under circumstances very honourable to her kindness and generosity.

Without knowing him, on his request, and on what Queen Elizabeth called the best letter of recommendation—his open and honest countenance—Madame de Genlis had helped the Chevalier de Queissat to lie concealed a few days in the Palais Royal. This gentleman, unjustly implicated in an assault of which his brother was guilty, was ultimately apprehended, tried, and condemned to pay a heavy fine, or remain imprisoned for life. The amount of the fine was beyond his means, and he seemed destined to perpetual imprisonment, when Madame de Genlis, who had vainly used all her influence to procure his acquittal, again came to his assistance. She published her "Théâtre d'Education" for his benefit; princes, nobles, and generous persons bought copies at a high price—the public did the rest. The whole edition was sold off in a few days. It brought in 46,000 livres, all expenses covered, and delivered the captive.

Soon after thus honourably and successfully entering the career of letters, Madame de Genlis took another of those decisive steps towards which her whole life had been tending: in the year 1777, being then thirty-one, she became governess to the Duchess of Chartres's twin daughters, who were not yet a year old, and she entered with them the Convent of Bellechasse, in which she remained until the Revolution drove her from France. The two infant princesses, Madame de Genlis's two daughters, the three sons of the Duke of Orleans, her own niece, and a little English girl called Pamela, who afterwards became Lord Edward Fitzgerald's wife, were successively under the care of this devoted and admirable educator.

Slander has been so pitiless to Madame de Genlis—her own means of justification were so few—that even though no actual proof has been adduced against her, it is impossible to say how far she was innocent of the charge under which she has so long laboured, of having been the Duke of Chartres's mistress. But an impartial mind must acknowledge that if she fell into this deep error, she acted very strangely for an ambitious and corrupt woman. Instead of remaining in the Palais Royal to secure and enjoy her power, she left a prince who was not more faithful to his mistresses than

to his wife and, at thirty-one, still young and eminently handsome, she shut herself up in a convent, where she enjoyed, indeed, all the comforts and luxuries of life, but certainly not the haughty though infamous distinction of a prince's mistress.

In her memoirs, Madame de Genlis has the tact and good taste not to give the history of the slanders that were whispered in her prosperity, but that beset her exile, and gave it new sorrows. She alludes to them, however, and partly attributes them to envy—and, we believe, not without cause.

Madame de Genlis was well-born, well-bred, highly-connected, and wealthy—for her husband, enriched by a splendid inheritance, had purchased the magnificent seat of Sillery. She was very handsome; she excelled in every feminine accomplishment; she had graceful manners; she never appeared in society without wishing to shine, and without accomplishing her purpose; she enjoyed the friendship of the Duchess of Chartres, and the confidence of the Duke; she wrote plays, in which her lovely children acted, and which the fashionable world of Paris went mad to see; she published them, and acquired as an author celebrity that became European; to crown all, she educated not merely princesses, but princes of the blood; she occupied a post which Montausier and

Fénélon had filled in another reign, and she did so with distinction and success; and if we add that she was imprudent, no slave to established laws, and that she gloried in authorship at a time when titled authoresses were rare, and considered to lose caste by writing for the public—we think that we have shown some reason why Madame de Genlis was looked on with a degree of envy which political differences afterwards turned into the bitterest hatred.

Madame de la Fayette's great modesty, ill health, and retired life had protected her from envy and censure, as other women were protected by their poverty and obscure birth; but Madame de Genlis appeared as an authoress at a time and in a position that made the censorious doubly bitter, when her least actions were known, and received the worst interpretations. One of her sins—a strange one it will seem now—was being the first lady who had a *bureau:* at a time when women of fashion, and even princesses, did not always know how to spell, this was considered an audacious infringement of masculine rights. No wonder that the climax came when the Duke of Chartres confided to her the education of his three sons, with the title of *Gouverneur*. Until then princes had been instructed by men of the highest rank or the most eminent learning; for

the first time a woman was called in to her natural task of educator.

There are few passages more interesting in the life of Madame de Genlis than those which refer to the education of her pupils. Active, energetic, indefatigable and vigilant, gentle and judicious, she accomplished marvels. Her contrivances for the instruction and amusement of the children confided to her care were most ingenious. Never was learning made more graceful than by Madame de Genlis, and rarely has teacher been more tenderly loved than she was and deserved to be. Here was genuine education indeed. Adopting Rousseau's theory concerning manual occupation, she made her pupils learn various trades. The young Duke of Valentinois was an excellent carpenter. Like his brothers, he learned how to swim, and once saved a drowning man's life. Madame de Genlis even had her pupils taught how to bleed and how to dress wounds, and for a whole winter she took them to the Hôtel Dieu for that purpose. She taught them to be men as well as gentlemen, and gave them as firm and manly a rearing as if she had foreseen the sorrows which the future held in store. But as yet all was smiling and fair, and everything justified the words of Addison which Madame de Genlis had caused to be inscribed in letters of gold above the

grated door that inclosed this happy retreat of youth, science, and literature—"True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise."

This time was perhaps the happiest in Madame de Genlis's life. She calls it "une vie délicieuse." It was at Bellechasse that she wrote the works which so long remained popular with youth—the two last volumes of her "Théâtre d'Education," "Adèle et Théodore," and "Les Veillées du Château." To her great mortification, the latter work was not pronounced by the Academy worthy of the Monthyon Prize for the most useful and best-written work published within the year; the distinction was bestowed on a very inferior and now-forgotten book by Madame d'Epinay—"Les Conversations d'Emilie."

This unjust decision did not affect Madame de Genlis's wide-spread fame. A few years before the French Revolution she went to England for a few weeks. She was received with great distinction. Fox, Sheridan, Lord Mansfield, the Duchess of Devonshire, Burke, Miss Burney, the Prince of Wales, and the severe Queen herself, welcomed the distinguished *gouvernante* and authoress. Madame de Genlis spent six weeks in England; and, with that practical spirit which never left her, and was one of her eminent and

distinguishing qualities, she brought back the moss-rose to France, where it was unknown.

The Revolution was the herald of Madame de Genlis's first troubles. The father of her pupils, now Duke of Orleans, shared the liberal fever of the times; ambition, hatred to the Royal family, and a wish for popularity, made him act a part neither honourable nor dignified in a French Prince and a monarch's near relative. Madame de Genlis, too, was a liberal, and believed in the regeneration of France. The Duke of Orleans caused his son to be received at the Jacobins, and Madame de Genlis took her pupils to witness the destruction of the Bastille. The Duchess of Orleans, whose political opinions were opposed to those of her husband, who for some time had ceased to regard Madame de Genlis with esteem or affection, and who resented the extreme though merited fondness which her children felt for their governess, vainly insisted that they should return to her care, now that their education was almost completed. Supported by the Duke of Orleans, Madame de Genlis resisted the Duchess, kept her post in defiance of scandal, and by thus forgetting her own dignity, did much to authorize suspicion.

After the King's flight to Varennes, and his return and captivity, Madame de Genlis, alarmed at the turn taken by that Revolution which had

opened with such promises of love and brotherhood, prudently resolved to leave Paris. Accompanied by Mademoiselle d'Orléans, the Duke's only surviving daughter, she proceeded, in 1791, to England. Here she had some mysterious adventures, which she has recorded at full length, but which led to nothing. Her reputation in England was then of the most doubtful cast. The emigrants—who hated her cordially—had not spared her; and scandal magnified their assertions. The indecorum of her new mode of life especially scandalized those who in Madame Brulard—as she was called since titles had been dropped—could not recognize the "elegant, amiable, high-bred Madame de Genlis, the apparent pattern of female perfection in manners, conversation, and delicacy."

Some of the charges against her are minutely told in that mirror of the times, Miss Burney's Diary, and are extremely curious as a picture of that strange epoch of confusion.

"They give a very unpleasant account of Madame de Genlis, or de Sillery, or Brulard, as she is now called. They say she has established herself at Bury, in their neighbourhood, with Mademoiselle la Princesse d'Orléans and Pamela, and a *Circe*, another young girl under her care. They have taken a house, the master of which always

dines with them, though Mrs. Young says he is such a low man he should not dine with her daughter. They form twenty, with themselves and household. They keep a botanist, a chemist, and a natural historian always with them. These are supposed to have been common servants of the Duke of Orleans in former days, as they always walk behind the ladies when abroad; but to make amends, in the new equalizing style, they all dine together at home. They visit at no house but Sir Thomas Gage's, where they carry their harps, and frequently have music. They have been to a Bury ball, and danced all night; Mademoiselle d'Orléans with anybody—known or unknown to Madame Brulard."

To one so precise as Miss Burney, and who had spent five years at a most formal Court, this must have seemed a most grievous fall indeed.

In 1792 Madame de Genlis and her pupil returned to France, but scarcely had they reached Bellechasse when they were informed that the young Princess was considered an emigrant, and must leave France until she received legal permission to return. They left at once for Tournay, Madame de Genlis vainly entreating her husband to escape before it was too late. He refused, saying it would be an act of cowardice to forsake his unhappy and distracted country. A few

months later, having voted against the King's death, M. de Genlis perished on the scaffold. His death was as honourable as his resolve had been generous.

The Duke of Orleans could not fly, had he wished it; that rank which had been so fatal to his honour, tied him to the land, and compelled him to fulfil his fate. His gloomy, sinister, haggard aspect struck Madame de Genlis when they met, and filled her with forebodings of ill omen when they parted, and he bade his daughter a last farewell. A few weeks later he voted for the death of the King; and before a year was over, the Revolution going on its course and resenting that Royal blood, even though humbled and lowered in the person of a Philippe Egalité, should have its representative in France, bade him ascend the scaffold of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

We cannot attempt to follow Madame de Genlis through all the vicissitudes and the wanderings of her long exile. But if in her youth she had, as she confesses, wished for strange adventures and romantic reverses, the wish was now fully gratified. She had been coldly received during her second stay in England; she was now shunned wherever she went. Foreigners knew her through the report of her countrymen; and this was not favourable.

She had long been odious to the Royalists, by her connexion with the Orleans family; by the patriots she was detested, as an accomplice in the republican General Dumouriez's treason. Soon after her arrival at Tournay, Madame de Genlis had married the young and beautiful Pamela Seymour to Lord Edward Fitzgerald; but Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle de Sercey, her niece, and the young Duke of Chartres, still accompanied her, and like her met with a sad, inhospitable reception wherever they turned their wanderings. A woman, two young girls, and a youth of seventeen, have rarely been more harshly persecuted. Poverty added its trials to unjustifiable obloquy. Madame de Genlis was able to pay for her board, and that of her niece and her pupil, in the convent of St. Clare, Bremgarten, Switzerland, which they entered under the assumed names of Madame Lennox and her nieces, the Miss Stuarts, but the Duke of Chartres was obliged to leave them. This separation produced one of the most honourable episodes in the life of the future Louis Philippe. For fifteen months he rose at four in the morning, to go and give lessons in transcendental mathematics, in a college of the Grisons. That bitter climate, that austere life, found him the worthy pupil of his wise and accomplished teacher. His real name

and rank were not known till his departure. He called himself Corby. In happier days, he had seen that name above the shop-door of a tradesman in the Palais Royal; and it recalled France and home in exile.

In the year 1794, Madame de Genlis and Mademoiselle d'Orléans were compelled to part. The Princess joined her aunt, the Princess of Conti, and Madame de Genlis and her niece left Bremgarten and proceeded to Germany. At Hamburg, Mademoiselle de Sercey married a rich merchant, and Madame de Genlis, now alone, wrote and worked for her living. Sent out from Berlin by the King's order, she found a safer and more hospitable home at Altona, where she passed as Miss Clarke. It was there she wrote her "Chevaliers du Cygne," which she sold to a German bookseller for a sum nearly equivalent to three hundred pounds sterling; and it was also there that, until her pen brought in its reward, she painted flowers and mosaic designs for the patterns of a print factory. She returned to Berlin after the King of Prussia's death, and continued her literary labours. In 1801 she got leave to return to France.

With a joyous heart the exile once more entered that land where she had been young, admired, and loved. Her second sojourn in Eng-

land had not been happy; she was disliked and shunned. In Switzerland and Germany she was persecuted; and with one exception, no person of distinction sought her. When she was in Hamburg, Klopstock asked to be introduced to her. She granted him an interview, which she has very graphically described. "A little, lame, and ugly old man," is her not very flattering account of his person. "I rose, went up to him, and led him to an arm-chair. He sat down silently, with a thoughtful look, crossed his legs, sank in the chair, and took the bearing of a man who has settled down for a long time. Then with a high, shrill voice, he put the following strange question to me: 'Madame, which do you consider the best prose writer—Voltaire or Buffon?'"

Without waiting for a reply, the illustrious poet decided in favour of Voltaire; spoke for three hours; did not give his accomplished hostess time or opportunity to put in six monosyllables, and left her "delighted with her charming conversation."

Madame de Genlis did not return to France alone. She had three children by her husband; a boy, who died young, and two daughters, who married before the French Revolution, and one of whom died at twenty-three. Madame de Valence, her only surviving child, was in some measure

adopted by her aunt, Madame de Montesson. Pamela, whom scandal called the Duke of Orleans' and Madame de Genlis's daughter, had left her young; her niece, Mademoiselle de Sercey, was married in Germany; her royal pupils were with their mother, and after educating so many children, Madame de Genlis found herself alone, at an age when solitude is dreary. To a passionate love for children, she added an ardent and persevering love for education. Struck with the beauty and intelligence of a child belonging to a poor widow, whose apartments were the last she occupied in Berlin, she asked him of his mother. He was gladly given up to her. To his surname of Baecker, Madame de Genlis added the name of Casimir, which was that of the boy she had lost so many years before, and her adopted son accompanied her to France.

She found Paris sadly altered. The streets had lost their old names; the very cries of the street-hawkers were now in a sad minor key; in the fiacres she recognized the private carriages of the old *noblesse;* she found the emblazoned volumes of their libraries on the book-stalls, and she saw the portraits of her dead or exiled friends in the old curiosity shops on the quays. Above all, that gay, brilliant society, in which she had acted so conspicuous a part, was scattered to every wind of heaven.

Napoleon was then first consul. He learned, after some time, that Madame de Genlis was returned to France, and that, having recovered nothing of her husband's large fortune, she was reduced to her own exertions for support. He generously gave her a handsome apartment in the arsenal; a pension of 6000 francs was afterwards added to this first favour. This handsome annuity, £240, she enjoyed until his abdication, and the return of the Bourbons. Napoleon did not merely like her works—he was especially delighted with "Mademoiselle de la Vallière"; he also thought highly enough of her intellect, to request her to write him a letter every fortnight, on any subject she chose—politics, finances, literature, and morals, at her pleasure.

Politics, Madame de Genlis declares, she disclaimed in these letters; but she adds that she wrote freely on literature. Hers was now, indeed, a purely literary life. The return of the Bourbons —of her pupils, the Duke of Orleans and his sister —changed nothing in her quiet existence; she continued writing almost to the last years of her life, which closed quietly in 1830, six months after the Duke of Orleans had ascended the throne of France under the name of Louis Philippe. Mrs. Opie, then in France, called upon her, and found her, what Moore had found her years before —"a lively little old woman."

"We went to La Comtesse de Genlis's," she writes in her diary; "she received me kindly, and I, throwing myself on my feelings, and remembering how much I owed her in the days of my childhood, became enthusiastically drawn towards her very soon. She is a really pretty old woman, of eighty-seven, very unaffected, with nothing of smartness, or affected state or style, about her. We passed through her bedroom (in which hung a crucifix) to her *salon*, where she sat, much muffled up, over her wood fire. She had dined at three o'clock, not expecting to be able to go out; but as the weather was fine, she soon consented to accompany us, but she, laughing, said, she must now go without *sa belle robe*. We said, in *any* gown she would be welcome. . . . Madame de Genlis did not talk much at dinner, but by her attention to what passed, and an occasional remark, it was evident nothing was lost upon her. After C. Moreau had given her health, with a most appropriate and flattering speech, wishing her to live many, many years, Julien the Encyclopédiste gave the health of the King.

"I thought Madame de Genlis conducted herself on this occasion with much simple dignity; yet it was a proud moment for her. . . . The room now filled with French, English, and Americans; many were presented to the venerable

countess, next to whom I sat, and then to me; she seemed to enjoy a scene to which, for some time, she had been a stranger. I found, while I was conversing on some interesting subjects, she had been observing me. Afterwards she said, 'Je vous aime!' she then added, with an archness of countenance and vivacity of manner, the remnant of her best days, 'Je vous sême' (imitating the bad pronunciation of some foreigner).

"At half-past ten I saw C. M. lead Madame de G. out, and I followed them; and paid her every attention in my power, for which she was grateful; when I had wrapt her up, and put on her bonnet for her, my servant got a coach, and C. M., another gentleman, and myself, conducted her home."

A few weeks later we find very different entries in the same diary, under the date of Dec. 31st.

"C. M. came in to tell me poor Madame de Genlis was that morning found dead in her bed." And, January 2nd: "Went to meeting, afterward to see poor Madame de Genlis in her coffin. Happily arrived too late! Was introduced to some dear friends of the deceased, who, for her sake, received me, *à bras ouverts*, because she loved me! I promised to go to her interment."

It took place on the 4th of January, and is thus recorded: "Went to meet the mourners

assembled for poor Madame de Genlis's funeral; Général Gérard was presented to me. At night, went to La Fayette's, as usual, and was introduced to many persons."

It was natural, no doubt, but there is something that jars between the two statements: the funeral in the morning—a party at night. Yet there is no doubt that Mrs. Opie—a kind and amiable woman—liked Madame de Genlis as that lady could make herself be liked. Fascination was her early gift, and did not desert her even in old age.

To the end of her life, Madame de Genlis also preserved one of the most remarkable characteristics of her long career—intellectual activity. In one of her last novels—"The Consistent Atheists"—she expressed the noble thought: "There is but one real misfortune on earth, and it is to think badly;" and, whatever her errors may have been, we think that through them all she strove towards that supreme good—a well-regulated mind. She never held anything beneath her attention, if it wore the aspect of knowledge. She never thought it too late to learn. When Lady Morgan called on her in Paris, and complimented her on the singular variety of her accomplishments, Madame de Genlis replied that she prided herself more on knowing twenty different trades, any of which would procure her a living. Her simple and easy

manners, her vivacity, and the vigour of her mind greatly struck her visitor. They were only natural in a woman who, long after she had passed her seventieth year, read again all the classics of Louis the Fourteenth's reign, in order to preserve her style in its purity, and who wrote and published agreeable books when she was eighty-two.

The intellectual life of Madame de Genlis is more easily appreciated than her actual real existence. She has written her "Memoirs" in eight octavo volumes; they are silent on the heaviest charges against her, and contain many confessions which, without insincerity, she might have suppressed; and they leave the mind in some perplexity concerning her real character—perhaps because that character offers many contradictions. From those pages, Madame de Genlis appears to have been both giddy and cold, amiable and resentful. She was shrewd and penetrating, but imprudent. With singular imprudence, indeed, she lays bare before us acts of deception so numerous, that sincerity cannot have been her habitual virtue. How far she has deceived her readers is the question that inevitably occurs to them as they read. She has not professed, at least, to tell us all the faults and follies of her life. And who can blame her? What life was ever meant to be thus revealed to the cold, inquiring glance of

strangers? God himself has locked up the human heart, because to His all-forgiving and all-pitying gaze alone is it fit that it should be opened. They who wantonly betray its secrets, sin against Him no less than against their kind.

"The end crowns the work," says the old Roman proverb, and perhaps it is well to judge a life by its close. That of Madame de Genlis ended in piety and virtue—whether that was built on penitence or not, let God judge.

There is a touching passage in the last volume of her "Memoirs," which we will allude to, before closing these remarks. She went, one day, to look at the house where she had spent the first five years of her married life, and in which her three children were born. Melancholy thoughts, sorrowful regrets, and tardy repentance for many follies and errors, awoke within her as she thought of the sixty vanished years—that treasure of time which she had, she says, unprofitably used, and sometimes wasted; and she closes this meditation with a beautiful thought, that reveals the pure and Christian aspect of this eminent woman:

"Let us not murmur; for we need ask God to forgive us almost all our misfortunes."

Our deepest sorrows are sins! Happy they whom humility has at last taught that lesson!

CHAPTER III.

HISTORICAL NOVELS.

In the collection of Madame de Genlis's works there is a short essay, entitled, "De l'Emploi du Temps." No one had a better right than she could claim to speak on this subject. Madame de Genlis was an accomplished musician; she played admirably on the harp, and on almost every instrument; she sang well; she drew with some skill; she danced gracefully, and dancing was then an art, and an elaborate one. She was self-educated, and her acquirements were many. She was thoroughly versed in history and literature, French and foreign. The English and Italian languages were familiar to her. Her position as governess to the Duke of Orleans's children, led her to knowledge which even a well-educated woman may ignore—that of the manufactures of her country, for instance, with which she had made

herself thoroughly acquainted. She was also well skilled in her needle, and in every feminine accomplishment. She joined practice to theory, and was an indefatigable worker. Some trades were even familiar to her. She could make artificial flowers, and morocco portfolios and pocket-books.

Neither so many accomplishments, nor so much knowledge, could be acquired without giving time and labour to the acquisition; and Madame de Genlis, who was a woman of the world, the attendant of a princess, and the governess of several young princes, was not, and could not be, mistress of her leisure. To what industry and perseverance may she not, therefore, lay claim, when, setting aside all that we have just enumerated, we look at the prodigious amount of her literary labours?

In the years 1825 and 1826, Madame de Genlis's works were published in eighty-four duodecimo volumes of average size. Her "Memoirs," in ten octavo volumes, and several works, the last of which she published in her eighty-third year, were not included in this collection; and, what is more praiseworthy than this extraordinary fertility, is that no woman who has written so much has also written so well. It is true that her invention failed as years closed on her, but to the last she wrote with clearness and elegance; she

cannot rank, indeed, amongst the fine writers of her country, for she had not genius; but she had many gifts—some delightful, some excellent, and which never forsook her. Amongst the rest, one which will always be rare and precious—the gift of judicious and original thought. A choice and delightful book could still be made out of the wise or graceful reflections this long-admired writer scattered through her pages during an authorship of more than fifty years.

Madame de Genlis's range was varied. Twenty volumes written by her for young people are still popular in France. Biography, history, education, etiquette, botany, fiction, religion, everything save politics, gave occupation to her fertile pen. She was also a critic, a severe though acute one; but next to her works on education, rank her novels; they had immense success in her own times, and are not forgotten, though much neglected, in ours. The best and shortest, "Mademoiselle de Clermont," is a beautiful and pathetic story. It is one of her historical tales, and, spite their deficiencies, these are still the most read of her fictions.

Historical novels are delightful when they appear, but they rarely go down to posterity. They belong too much to the time in which they were written, and when that time has gone by the charm is broken.

Madame de Genlis's historical novels embrace every period, from the days of the Prophets down to the court of the Regent. "The youth of Moses" she called a poem. She had precedents for the strange assumption; but can he be called a poet, who has no music in his soul? They alone who can sing, can claim a rank among the divine songsters of the human race. In "The Knights of the Swan," the authoress claimed some of the privileges of poetry. She wrote it in her exile, when many of the restraints of her life were removed, and its indelicacy verged on immorality. The profligacy of the cruel and voluptuous Armoflède is meant as a warning, but though Spartans might stand and look at the drunken Helot, we need nobler and purer lessons than those of the heathen world. The historical perversions of this romance are curious enough. Never have the doughty Charlemain and his peers been more strangely represented. Who would dream of finding Ogier the Dane, that man of mighty appetite and robber ways, turned into a lovesick hero, a compound of the powdered Marquis and the pink-ribboned shepherd.

"Jeanne de France," "Mademoiselle de la Fayette," "The Duchesse de la Vallière," "Madame de Maintenon" are agreeable books, between

biography and fiction; and though their popularity has passed away, they show extraordinary tact and skill, and had great success in their day.

Looking over French history, Madame de Genlis saw, on that often gloomy and often terrible background, some tender and lovely female figures, whom the historian carelessly sketched as he passed on. She paused to look, and, having looked, could not resist the desire to linger, and paint at leisure. With a patient hand she collected materials, and interpreted them with a sagacious spirit. When there was a deficiency she supplied it, when there was an unpleasant passage she suppressed it. She thus produced flattered and softened portraits of lovely originals, portraits that had a charm in which biography often fails. They did not tell all, nor think every thing in a human life was meant to be told.

The history of "Jeanne de France" is beautiful and pathetic. Married by the cruel policy of Louis XI. to the young Duke of Orleans, she never possessed her husband's heart. She had a fine mind and a noble soul; she loved him devotedly; without her intercession and her tears he might have died in a dungeon; but she was misshapen and plain; he did not love her, and his first step on ascending the throne was to have

his marriage annulled. Jeanne retired to a convent, took the veil, and died young in odour of sanctity.

This sad history Madame de Genlis developed with much skill. She considered the introduction of a plain heroine in fiction a daring act. We have progressed since then, and women have learned to be plain in print, as well as out of it. Indeed, plain or not, it matters little; the heroine will always be an ideal being, even though she may look most real; she will always be that something beyond truth, without which there is no fiction. Her beauty, her excellence, moral or intellectual, only show us after all the standard without which the reader will not admire. As his taste is, mean or lofty, so are the men and women of his books.

This daring attempt to enshrine a noble soul in a poor body, Madame de Genlis did not repeat. Mademoiselle de la Fayette, her next heroine in chronological order, was a dark and lovely girl, who inspired in the bosom of a King one of the purest passions woman ever returned.

Louis XIII., the inglorious son of an heroic father, acts a sad and subdued part in French history. The name of Richelieu claims all that his reign held of stern or magnificent. Power, mercy, life and death, the very destinies of France, were in the hands of the mighty Cardinal, and

with them true, royal majesty. The Monarch was but a kingly shadow, who went wearily from palace to palace, a prey to sadness. Indolence and melancholy seemed constitutional in the son of the gay Gascon. Mistrustful of all who approached him, of his brother Gaston of Orleans, and even of his own proud and handsome wife, Anne of Austria, Louis twice had faith in woman, and, strangely enough, he chose for the objects of his platonic admiration two noble and generous girls, whose only object was to bind him more closely to the neglected queen. Both Mademoiselle d'Hautefort and Mademoiselle de la Fayette were devoted to Anne of Austria. But the weakness of man is fatal even to the objects of his love, and both Mademoiselle d'Hautefort and her successor found it so. That pale, handsome King, with the sad dark eyes and heroic face—that man who was personally brave, whose justice has passed into a proverb, and who, if he was severe to others, was to himself austere and unforgiving, yet lacked one of the noblest attributes of man—he could not protect what he loved. His mother died in a garret. Mademoiselle d'Hautefort was exiled, and Mademoiselle de la Fayette left the Court and retired to a convent. Richelieu's jealousy of her influence is the motive ascribed by history to her retreat; the scruples

of her conscience at a passion which, though pure, was not lawful, is the theme chosen by Madame de Genlis.

Out of this slender thread of an ideal passion, unable to resist the hard touch of reality, she constructed a delicate and touching story. There was more matter, and far more interest, in the "Duchesse de la Vallière." But the most pathetic of its incidents are world-known, and the fictitious surprise without convincing us. We are also conscious of two heroines: of Madame de Genlis's, who speaks rather too much like a woman who has read Jean Jacques; and of the mild, humble Mademoiselle de la Vallière, who was born for virtue, who sinned without vice, who loved the king for himself, who shrank from the sight of the injured queen, and who, though too weak to break her bonds until love forsook her, yet tried to atone for her sin and her weakness by the heroic penance of thirty-three years. Youth, beauty, love even—for either the Duke of Lauzun or the Prince of Longueville would have been glad to marry her—were all her own yet, and she buried them all in the living grave of a Carmelite convent. There is something too beautiful and too pathetic in such a story for it to be told again; it is one of the lovely legends of humanity made —to float down the tide of time.

Yet great success seemed to prove to Madame de Genlis that she had done right. The "Duchesse de la Vallière" was in every hand—even in the mighty hands that then wielded the destinies of France. Buonaparte began the tale, read it to the end without stopping, and shed tears over the close, which is beautiful and pathetic. It was of this book that Sir James Mackintosh said—"Though not precisely a novel, it is surely a most fascinating work." It was so, no doubt, but the truth has proved too strong for it.

"Madame de Maintenon" is almost all true. The history of that sagacious and remarkable woman, who succeeded the haughty Madame de Montespan in Louis the Fourteenth's heart, and who at the age of fifty-two married a monarch three years her junior, and the haughtiest king in Europe, did not require invention to read like a romance. Born in a prison, set to keep turkeys in her youth, married at eighteen to a burlesque and licentious poet without legs, exposed after his death to all the bitterness of poverty, she rose to the king's esteem, admiration, and love, by the power of a mind whose charm he acknowledged, and of a virtue which, though gentle, he found inexorable. More wonderful still, she secured the tender affection of his wife. Mary Anne of Austria gave her portrait but to one person, and that

person was Madame de Maintenon. Neither could then foresee that the queen, the younger woman of the two, would die first, and that, though not bearing her title, Madame de Maintenon would be her successor on the throne.

But far more successful than this half novel, half biography, was a much shorter tale—"Mademoiselle de Clermont"—which is still Madame de Genlis's most substantial claim to fame. The best part of her youth was spent in a Court, and in a centre of courtiers and intrigues. She painted well what she had observed closely, and in her pages the old courtly world has a great look of reality. When she left palaces and noble mansions to enter more humble homes, she left behind her the best part of her power — one of the greatest charms of all novel-writing — truth in detail.

By what had been to her the present she judged the past. Traditions supplied by the survivors of the preceding age gave the matter on which imagination might work. Madame de Puysieux, wife of Monsieur de Genlis's uncle, had been the Princess of Clermont's bosom friend; and it was at Chantilly, where the drama of her life took place, in an alley that still bore the ill-fated name of Melun, that she related to Madame de Genlis this short and sad story.

Mademoiselle de Clermont was a daughter of the illustrious house of Condé, and sister to that Duke of Bourbon who governed France for Louis XV. after the death of Philip, Duke of Orleans. Little is known of her, save that she was beautiful. Her name is merely mentioned in history, and would be forgotten if it were not found in Madame de Genlis's pages.

Madame de Genlis knew princesses well, and she has made Mademoiselle de Clermont a princess from head to foot. Beautiful, stately, and free, she moves about the princely abode, and the magnificent gardens of Chantilly, like a young queen in the first happy dawn of her sovereignty. No other female figure appears near hers. Her brother's influence on her destiny is decisive, but is carefully kept back until the catastrophe. The young king is mentioned, but we never seem to see him; we see no one save the generous, imprudent young princess.

With the quick instincts of vanity and pride, Mademoiselle de Clermont soon becomes conscious of the coldness of M. de Melun. In the midst of universal flattery his voice alone is silent. Mademoiselle de Clermont is piqued, and, availing herself of the privileges of rank, she questions him why, for instance, when she reads novels aloud to the ladies, is he a cold and inattentive

listener. The Duke, surprised, hesitates to reply. At length he frankly answers—

"I see without pain persons of mediocre intellect and ordinary station waste in vain and useless tasks the season of youth; but in those whom their rank and their natural superiority raise above others, this mistake grieves me keenly."

Mademoiselle de Clermont blushes, says no more, and withdraws her arm from his; but the next day, and to the annoyance of her female listeners, she begins a course of grave historical reading.

From this day the Princess chooses the Duke of Melun for her counsellor and friend. She sees in him a lofty ideal of honour and worth, which, under his guidance, she hopes to reach. How can he reject advances so modest, yet so bewitching? —how can he refuse to become the faithful adviser of this beautiful young creature, so docile to good counsels, so penitent after error?

He falls into the snare, but not blindly. If Mademoiselle de Clermont does not know the nature of the feeling that draws her towards him, he knows but too well what he feels for this princely lady. He knows, and cannot conceal it. With delight and pride she sees that she has conquered his coldness and subdued his austerity. Honour and duty compel him to shun her—he

leaves Chantilly. But what matter? Great joy knows no fear. To love and be loved is happiness enough for Mademoiselle de Clermont. To her we might apply the subtle and delicate passage which the trials of another heroine suggested to the same author: "Love cares but for the present time. Of all feelings, it is that which the future troubles least. It fears to give it a glance; for it is never sure of finding itself there."

They meet in Paris. M. de Melun's fortitude cannot resist Mademoiselle de Clermont's dangerous openness; for, with a freedom which never offends—so much is it tempered by frankness and modesty—the imprudent Princess is ever showing him the power affection and esteem have given him over her heart. They exchange a rapid confession and mutual vows; then shocked at what he has done, at the ungenerous advantage he has taken of her weakness and ignorance, M. de Melun again departs—this time for months.

His struggles are vain. In vain, on his return to Paris, he even undertakes, at the Duke of Bourbon's request, to persuade Mademoiselle de Clermont to accede to a royal alliance, which she obstinately rejects. When he is left alone with her, his resolves grow weak. She does not hide that her love is unchanged, and solitude has only deepened his. Duty, pride, honour, are unavail-

ing. There is but one theme on which the lovers can dwell. And thus it goes on. Mademoiselle de Clermont persists in a love which raises her in her own esteem, and M. de Melun in striving against a passion which his conscience condemns; for it makes him a traitor to truth—and two years in all pass away, and struggles, doubts, torments, suffering, and illness that looked in the very face of death, have only given their mutual affection more fervour and depth.

All this Madame de Genlis has told admirably. M. de Melun is a proud and honourable man, and his reluctance to yield to a passion which reason, as well as honour and pride, reprove, we never ascribe to coldness. Mademoiselle de Clermont is a noble woman; she loves because she esteems and admires. No brilliant courtier, no flatterer, won her heart. She does not stoop from her rank, she soars above it; and the delicacy of her choice redeems the freedom with which her partiality is displayed. Up to this the story progresses with the most delicate skill. It is a graceful love-tale: a beautiful princess loves an accomplished gentleman; it is not a love likely to end well, but its end is subordinate to its progress. We care more to know if Mademoiselle de Clermont will conquer M. de Melun's coldness, than whether she will sink from the rank of princess of the blood to that of

duchess. But in fiction, as well as in reality, there is a dangerous point when love rushes on passion. That point is reached in the tale when Louise de Bourbon Condé suggests a private marriage to her lover.

From the time that fatal resolve is taken, the whole story changes. It is told in the same language, but not in the same key. A sense of gloom, of something ominous and disastrous hanging over the heroine and her lover, comes to us with great power. The love-tale is turning into a tragedy. As Mademoiselle de Clermont crosses, at night, the gardens of Chantilly, in order to go to the meeting whence she is to return as wife, she feels herself suddenly held back. She looks up, terrified. No one is there—no mortal hand detains her. It is but her dress that was caught as she passed by the statue of the haughty and heroic Condé, whose blood and name she is going to humble. For a while she is startled; but love proves stronger than pride, and she goes on.

Mademoiselle de Clermont is married; she is happy, and her happiness lasts a week, at the close of which the King visits Chantilly. She does the honours of the princely abode to her brother's royal guest. The fêtes are splendid; a stag-hunt takes place the second day of the King's stay.

M. de Melun prepares, as usual, to follow Mademoiselle de Clermont's carriage; but the Duke of Bourbon, whose eyes are at length opened, has spoken sternly to his sister, and she is obliged to bid M. de Melun to leave her. He rides away, giving her a last look. In a few minutes a loud cry is heard—he had crossed the chase, and the stag had turned round and gored him.

A wife, whose husband has received what may be his death-wound, is privileged to give up all to attend on him; but the unhappy Mademoiselle de Clermont is not a wife. She is a princess, a king is her guest, and etiquette has nothing to do with an aching heart. In vain, in her despair at not being allowed to see M. de Melun, she confesses her marriage to her brother. The Duke is not a brother—not even an angry one. He is a prince, and he checks his anger at this discovery, to help her to play her part to the end. He knows that death will soon rid him of an odious tie, and he bids her hope—he has even lenient promises of forgiveness with which to soothe her—and what with prayers, remonstrances, and commands, he keeps her out of the sick room. The surgeon is bribed—even the servants are deceived—every care is taken to keep the Princess in ignorance of the truth.

The King is to leave the next day. Mademoi-

selle de Clermont, splendidly dressed, waits on him for weary hours that seem intolerable. She is pale, spite her rouged cheeks. The forced smile on her lips, her restless looks, betray her secret torment. Strange, inquiring glances meet her everywhere, for who has not noticed her partiality to M. de Melun? The King alone is amiable and free. She sits next him at dinner; she must hear and answer. When dinner is over, the play begins, and the princess must hear it, with her brother on one side of her, and the King on the other. It is a comic play—the house rings with laughter, and her heart is breaking. Late at night the King leaves. At three the Princess is alone and free. She steals out, as she had stolen a week before to go to a happy meeting. She reaches his door—it is closed; she listens—all is silent. She returns to her room with daylight. There she sits down, passively waiting till her attendants waken.

But the King is gone, the *fêtes* are over, concealment is no longer required. At seven, she hears a step—M. de Melun's servant appears before her. No words are needed; his looks, his aspect, tell the tale—her lover, her husband, is dead! She sinks on her knees, and receives the paper this sad messenger has come to deliver. It is the first letter she wrote to him—the words,

"for ever," signed by her—the pledge of love she voluntarily gave him, when, from honour, he voluntarily renounced her after their first avowal. He held it dear, and sent it to her on his death-bed.

And thus ends "Mademoiselle de Clermont;" a tale remarkable for beauty and pathos, and, spite a little overstrained sentiment, for the directness with which it is told. Mademoiselle de Clermont is an exquisite heroine—one of those half angels whom J. Joubert loved in Madame de Genlis's works. Her faults are those of youth, inexperience, and high rank. Her virtues are all her own. She is modest, though free; but that freedom springs from the heroic greatness of her soul, and the worthiness of the loved one. It is the blood of the Condés asserting itself in the faith and truth of a woman's heart.

Very different is the "Siege of la Rochelle," though it is still a popular work with that easily-pleased class of readers who require, above all, a stirring plot and dramatic incidents. The story is improbable, but interesting enough. Clara Montalban, a beautiful and amiable girl, is on the eve of marriage with Valmore, a handsome young widower; her betrothed is rich, but not so wealthy as his young son, Jules. He is that son's heir, and Montalban, Clara's father, resolves to

murder the child. He leaves the château, returns privately, and accomplishes the deed. He is seen by Clara, who had playfully hidden beneath a table. She faints with horror, and wakens to find herself accused of the crime, of which even Valmore thinks her guilty. She is tried, condemned, and reprieved. But she will not betray the real murderer, and the dishonour of guilt still clings to her. After many adventures, in which the siege of Rochelle is introduced, Clara discovers that Montalban is not her father, and can declare her innocence, and become the wife of Valmore.

The "Siege of la Rochelle" has merit, but the lowest sort of merit—merit unworthy Madame de Genlis.

The success of cotemporary romances misled her. She, too, would be pathetic and sublime! She produced a good imitation, which long passed current, but never with persons of delicate taste. The world of fancy is a strange world. It will allow imagination the wildest flights, but it requires consistency, and there is none in a mixture of wild invention and small reality. If we are led on at once into that something beyond truth —which at heart we all love—and kept there as in a dream, we may read on, and never waken till the tale ends. Ardent writers have that power over us when they follow the bent of their

own mind. They can make a truth of their own, and compel us to believe in it; but when they are faithless to themselves, the gift of persuasion forsakes them. It rarely goes alone—with it depart others as precious and as noble.

The worst of untruth in incident is that it leads to untruth in character. Valmore and Clara are incredibly calm through their awful trials. We are told that they marry and are happy. It cannot be. Clara cannot forget that she wore the features of a murderess in her lover's sight; that he has sickened to think he ever loved such a wretch. And if she can forget what ought to have burned itself into her very brain, can he? Will not the memory of his injustice be an ever-renewing torment? Can love, the strongest but the most delicate of feelings, survive such wounds in either heart? Duty, the tie of blood, teach to bear and forgive much; but unwedded love, love not calmed and sanctified by marriage, is lofty and exacting. It will have the whole heart, the whole faith, or it will have nothing. Nay, more, when it becomes conscious of having withheld those precious gifts, it perishes; for it becomes conscious of frailty and weakness, and of that which is most abhorrent to its nature—mortality.

CHAPTER IV.

DOMESTIC TALES.

Besides her historical tales, Madame de Genlis wrote several novels, in which she painted society, Parisian or provincial, such as she had seen it before the great catastrophe of the French Revolution; or developed her own views and feelings on two subjects which she justly considered important—morals and education.

Some of these novels are amusing now by their strangeness. The "Battuecas," greatly prized by its author, rests on the tradition—a true one, she avers—of a lost Spanish valley, in which men and women grew up unacquainted with civilization, but naturally gentle and refined. Placide, the hero, is one of these delightful savages. He is a poet, too—a renowned one—though his first adventure, when he appears in the commonplace

Spanish world, is not of the poetic cast. Placide is unacquainted with mine and thine, and steals as naturally as any civilized thief, though somewhat more openly. A battle with a baker is the first lesson of law and property he receives. His little mistake is rectified by a friend, and he proceeds to Madrid, to fascinate a lovely and refined lady, criticize all he sees, undergo some adventures, and finally return to his valley and his Battuecas bride Inès.

"Alphonsine," another Spanish story, is conceived in the same probable spirit. After writing so much on education, Madame de Genlis no doubt remembered an important omission. She had shown how a prudent mother is to educate her child in the world. What if she were to show now how a daughter can be educated out of it. The lesson was not very practical indeed, but it had the merit of novelty. Accordingly, a wife is locked up in a cavern by her incensed husband, gives birth to a child, rears it safely and educates it.

Deprived of light since her birth, ignorant of a world beyond her cavern—of a human being besides her mother—ignorant of the very means by which that mother receives food, and acquainted with nothing that mercy enjoins to conceal, yet conscious of the existence of a God, of a future

life—nay, even of death—Alphonsine grows up a prodigy of moral innocence. A young soul that has never been contaminated by the aspect of vice, a mind which the sight of external objects has never distracted, are beautiful, no doubt; but they are inconvenient. This young Eve, on being restored to light and the society of human beings, moves for some time in a world of enchantment, and displays the artless graces of primitive innocence. Like Miss Edgeworth's Virginie in "Belinda," she prefers flowers to diamonds: they are the more lovely of the two, and she has not learned that beauty can be perishable. The immortal splendour of sparkling gems, that durability which seems so strange in this changing world, are lost on Alphonsine, for she has no experience. The same deficiency allows her to be lured from her home by a designing lover, and, though innocent, to forfeit her reputation. She marries indeed; yet the merits of the cavern-plan education are seriously compromised in our eyes.

In all times stories as fanciful and as extravagant as these have been written. Amongst moderns, Sir Thomas More and Fénélon, two pure and noble souls, found solace in the contemplation of ideal excellence, and of a fairer social state than that which they saw around them. The

eighteenth century delighted in such visions of what it conceived to be perfection. What men and women we should have had if all its dreams could have been carried out! Rather alike, it is true; for individual character can only interfere with the beauty of systems; but men and women of the right sort, no doubt—else the inventors of the original model would not have held them forth to our admiration. But though we may be amused at this ideal of human excellence, we cannot remember without emotion how much of her aspirations towards a supreme good, how much of her resentment of great wrong, humanity has cast in that visionary channel. It was long her only outlet, as it was her only hope: for men it was politics, for women society. Fénélon reformed states, Mademoiselle de Scudéry improved love, and Madame de Genlis educated.

She had the clear, exact mind best suited to such artificial composition. Imagination spoils it, and she had little or none. Like De Foe, she could invent and paint, with great verisimilitude, modes of life of which she had no actual knowledge—the more unreal the better. Her choice of subject was not felicitous, but she made readers believe in her cavern life. It had no romance, no wildness; but it bore a clear, matter-of-fact air of truth.

"Alphonse, or the Natural Son," "The

Parvenus," "Palmyre and Flaminie, the Rival Mothers," were used by Madame de Genlis as the vehicle of general social truth. They contain pleasing sketches, and embody some judicious opinions; but they are cold though well-told tales. Especially dull, from beginning to end, is "The Parvenus."

Strange to say, Madame de Genlis, who knew the world so well—the French world especially—who had seen life under all its aspects; who had been poor, rich, a countess, the companion of princes, an authoress, an exile, a fugitive; who had worked and written for her bread, and been compelled to mingle in every society—yet could only paint one aspect of life, the elegant and the courtly. In "The Parvenus" she attempted to paint the middle and upper classes of France before the Revolution, during its progress, and after its close. The effort showed her unequal to draw that shifting scene of life which she knew so well. She succeeded better in delicate delineation of character. Under the name of the Duke of Rosmond, in the "Rival Mothers," we are to recognize the handsome, profligate Maréchal de Richelieu:—

"Nothing in him betrays vanity. His languid and abstracted look, his simple and easy manners, rather announce a sort of good-nature, and utter carelessness to please.

"Superficial in everything excepting in the art of seduction, he has only the kind of information that can impose on people of the world. His supple and subtle mind fails in breadth; his soul has neither loftiness nor sensibility; he has but one kind of penetration—that he possesses in an eminent degree. When he studies men, he can only perceive their weaknesses, errors, and vices. Their virtues escape him; he does not believe in them. Although he has no sort of principle, he thinks that one must never lose an opportunity of doing good, when one can do so without sacrifice or personal risk. Everything beyond this morality and goodness is only folly in his eyes. Delicacy, generosity, heroism, he considers extravagant, or the result of secret plans based on selfishness. Sublime virtue he considers the folly of a narrow mind, or the clever artifice of deep genius.

"His knowledge of the world has taught him that the most delicate praise is not the most convincing. Minds are so refined that ingenious flattery is mistrusted, precisely because it is so well turned. The Duke of Rosmond keeps his *finesse* for censure. His epigrams are full of wit and delicacy; but when he flatters, he only wishes to appear sincere. His praises have a laconism and a sort of coarseness that make them irresistible when coming from a man of so much wit.

He utters them like so many commonplace, well-known truths. Neither his tone nor his manner allows one to suspect that he intends pleasing. His encomiums are received by the most humble: he does not give them; they seem to *escape* him—how can they be *refused?* If one ventures to think them exaggerated, he does not insist, but looks so surprised that one almost blushes at having been so modest; one fears to be accused of false humility. Such is the dangerous individual who has all the graces and all the vices required to appear with *éclat* in the career of gallantry and ambition, but who, in any other, would have been a man of extreme mediocrity."

Never was the Duke of Richelieu—the irresistible conqueror of female hearts, the universal favourite of his age—drawn with a touch more sure and delicate than by Madame de Genlis, under the name of Rosmond.

"Rash Vows" is one of the most remarkable of Madame de Genlis's domestic tales. Skill, interest, close and correct delineation of character, thought, and feeling, are its attributes; but improbable incident destroys a fine lesson on the dangers of passion and the perils of enthusiasm. The rash vows that proved so fatal to the hero and heroine have not proved less so to the story.

The Marquis de Sainville is thirty-two. He is

handsome, rich, and accomplished; yet he is not a happy man. He is sick of life, of human nature in general, and of women in particular. With every means of happiness at his command, he is hard, cold, and sarcastic; a wearied man of the world, whom nothing and none can please—not even his devoted friend the Baron.

The Baron is only a sketch; but he is very agreeably drawn. He is amiable, officious, and good-natured. He adores the Marquis of Sainville, and admires him profoundly. To forward his friend's happiness, and act himself the part of confidential adviser in a love-story, is his great delight. But M. de Sainville is so haughty, so fastidious, so mistrustful, that his are all short-lived passions, and the Baron is as often comforter of some fair forsaken one as adviser to his suspicious friend.

M. de Sainville is in one of his gloomy fits when the tale opens. After exhausting all the arguments of philosophy, the Baron proposes a journey to his friend's estates in Languedoc, a hundred and fifty leagues off. Sainville negligently consents, and they leave Paris the next day.

M. de Sainville, who likes neither town nor country, finds no great pleasure in his ancestral home; but the Baron finds a delightful mystery. An English lady, named Constance, has settled in

the neighbourhood. She wears a thick veil; she neither pays nor receives visits; and no one knows anything about her—whereon every one concludes that she can be no good. The two friends manage to see her by moonlight, as she walks, unveiled, in her garden. She is young and lovely, and they both fall in love with her. Vain love, and dangerous—Constance must never marry.

The story of Lady Clarendon—such is the real name of Constance—is well told, and very interesting. She is beautiful, amiable—her young husband adores her; but too fond a heart, a temper too exacting, make her utterly wretched, and with her every one who comes within reach of her fatal beauty.

Lord Clarendon and his wife have been married for a few years, when they go to London. He shows a taste for society and pleasure which, though not culpable, deeply offends his wife. Can a husband be fond when anything but his wife delights him? She grows querulous and sad; he wearies of her society. She confides her sorrows to Lord Elby, her husband's brother-in-law, a bosom friend; he hears her with sympathy, but his compassion bears no fruit. Lord Clarendon neglects his wife more and more; at length their estrangement is total; they live in the same house without meeting; and Ophelia, a

handsome and accomplished girl of notorious profligacy, replaces Lady Clarendon in her husband's heart.

Lady Clarendon is overwhelmed with grief, but does nothing to win back the heart her imprudence alienated; or rather, she does but one thing, and that is fatal to her. Every night she enters her husband's study, takes down two drawings which Ophelia has presented him; she copies them as soon as morning light allows her, and before any one is up she restores them to their respective places, until her copies, being finished, she can substitute them for the originals. The sterile satisfaction of knowing that her husband shall no longer admire her odious rival's sketches, is all the benefit she reaps from this imprudent step. Servants have seen her stealing about the house with a light and a key; they know that Lord Elby is her friend, they conclude that he is her lover, and that she admits him. Her sisters-in-law, who hate her, eagerly grasp at the accusation. Lady Clarendon does not even know that she is suspected, when her incensed husband sends her down to his seat in Derbyshire, and the public has pronounced her guilty.

Lady Clarendon is not dismayed. Has she not her friend, Lord Elby, to justify her and himself, by producing Ophelia's drawings? This hope is

soon destroyed. Lord Clarendon departs for the Continent without seeing her, and Lord Elby writes a few sad words to acknowledge that his efforts in her favour have proved unavailing. Disgraced, though innocent, Lady Clarendon proceeds to Derbyshire. Everything is lost: reputation, the world's esteem, her husband's love.

Hitherto her sorrows have been brought on by an exacting spirit, which love resents; now pride, conscience, and injured innocence combine to lead her to the verge of ruin. She receives a letter from Lord Elby; he writes that, on the eve of leaving England for years, he should like to see her again, if she could prudently allow it. Lady Clarendon's answer is a prompt invitation. She longs for the presence of a real friend, and since her husband knows in his heart that she is innocent, and yet lets her be thought guilty, she is reckless of the world's opinion.

Lord Elby comes. The character of this nobleman is drawn with considerable skill. It is a careful study, which Madame de Genlis was unfortunately able to paint from life. His plausible aspect, his covert look, the caution of his behaviour, inspire us with a mistrust Lady Clarendon does not share. Lord Elby's conduct is at first exquisitely delicate and reserved. Yet gradually,

and as light pierces darkness, it implies love hopeless and reverent, but human love for all that. Lady Clarendon is startled, frightened, and touched. She is too innocent to return this doubly-forbidden affection, but she has suffered too much not to feel its devotedness. Her imagination is fascinated, and Lord Elby's very coldness and austerity give more meaning and depth to his passion.

Accident discovers his perfidy on the very day she had appointed to give him a private meeting. It is he who slandered her, who alienated her husband. She taxes him with his treachery, and he meets her reproaches with a mixture of audacity, fierceness, and love. He confesses all—that for years he has been working to win her; he taunts her with the promised meeting, and vows that if it had taken place their destinies could no more have been sundered, for sin would have bound them for ever.

There is terrible truth in the accusation, and Lady Clarendon herself feels it; she is virtuous, she meant no harm, but she is weak, and, with a man so determined and so perfidious, must she not ultimately have been a degraded victim?

Lord Elby commits suicide, and Lady Clarendon convinces her husband of her innocence. He is full of joy and remorse; they love more than

ever, and become more than ever wretched. The world does not choose to retract its opinion of Lady Clarendon's virtue. Her husband cannot compel either its silence or its civility. Stung and exasperated by a contempt he has not the fortitude to endure, he mourns for the loss of a society without which he considers life worthless. Lady Clarendon is grieved to see that her love cannot repay him for all, when she, the injured sufferer, finds his love all-sufficient. In short, the weak man is still weak, and the impassioned woman has not learnt one lesson from experience. Too late she perceives that she can more easily not love than love moderately.

"For an extreme effort," she says herself, "we use all our strength, and as it is ever proportionate to the energy of our passions, it is ever possible to achieve self-subjection. But it often fails us when less courage is needed; and the victory that promises most glory is almost ever the easiest and the surest to win."

Useless knowledge. Lord Clarendon had survived his wife's supposed infidelity; but he cannot survive the world's neglect. He sinks into a slow fever, and dies. His wife vows to know no second love, causes her vow to be inscribed on his grave, and retires to France, and there becomes fatal to a third man.

Admiration and pity inflame M. de Sainville all the more. Lady Clarendon, who has been a widow some years, secretly returns a love more pure than Lord Elby's, and more impassioned than Lord Clarendon's. Pride and honour forbid her to confess it. Her denials are either dangerously mild or cruelly harsh; they seem made to charm and exasperate a lover. Now she tells Sainville that he will forget her, and marry another; and now, when he wishes to fly from her, she gently talks of friendship, and detains him. He becomes gloomy, and she is sad. It is a long, keen, tormenting struggle, in which neither prevails entirely, and in which both suffer agony: Sainville, because he has no hope of prevailing—Lady Clarendon, because she daily feels herself growing more weak. She had built herself an idol of passion and heroic fidelity, and with bitterness she feels that if Providence had not favoured her, she would have become Lord Elby's mistress, though she loved her husband; and, humbled in her own heart, she learns by a second love—stronger even than the first—that quick and exacting affection is not always deep.

At length, love prevails over pride. Sainville is returning from a journey. Lady Clarendon learns that grief has worn him to a spectre; and after the most harrowing hesitation and remorse,

she meets him with the declaration that she is his. M. de Sainville hears her with the gloomiest mien lover thus favoured ever wore; he opens his cloak, and shows her the cross of the order of Malta. He is a Knight of Saint John; he cannot marry; he has taken a vow more solemn, more binding, than that she had caused to be engraved on her husband's tomb.

Lady Clarendon has survived the loss of her husband's love, of reputation, and of her idolized husband himself—why must the emotions of a few hours bring on a fever that carries her off rapidly? She dies happy not to have broken her vow, and exacts from her lover a solemn promise not to attempt his life.

Thus ends this well-told tale of passion, in which the incidents are too often improbable and exaggerated, but the feelings never. Lady Clarendon is weak, loving, amiable, and, like all weak persons, selfish. It is her love, her passion, her pleasure, that she consults throughout. She is virtuous, charitable, and forgiving, but she has not one lofty, one generous, one self-forgetting impulse. Even her passion has no substance, no reality—it is but an echo or a dream. She is made to love, not once, but as often as one love leaves her and another comes.

Very different from feelings so weak is Sain-

ville's furious passion. It is vehement as well as deep; exacting—jealous even of the past—but strong and living. We see him no more after Lady Clarendon's death, but we know that he will never experience a second love. He gave her all he could give to woman—faith, reverence, jealousy, and adoration. There is no well-spring in his heart, to renew these offerings. We may wonder that a woman's fragile beauty should kindle love so strong, but the worthiness of the object has not much to do with the durability of human affection. We must not judge the love by the loved one, but by the heart of the lover; as that heart is weak or strong, light or deep, so is the feeling.

And here we end with Madame de Genlis. She wrote many more novels, none equal to those we have noticed. She had many gifts; the most effective was character—not graphic character, but that which a delicate pen can analyze in a few words, or sketch briefly. Delicacy and *finesse* mark these sketches; they are not the result of intuition, but taken from life and society by an observer full of penetration. We may rely on Madame de Genlis, for when she painted what she had not seen she fell into error. The real world, which is invisible to some, to her was always present.

CHAPTER V.

MADAME DE CHARRIÈRE.—THE "LETTERS FROM LAUSANNE."

THE delicate taste of an ingenious French critic has of late years revived the neglected, though not forgotten, name of Madame de Charrière. She was never popular, not even in her own day; Madame Riccoboni, Madame de Genlis, and Madame Cottin herself, are far better and more extensively known than the authoress of "Caliste" is, or ever will be; and yet though those three ladies wrote more interesting and better constructed stories than this charming Dutch woman, not one of the three equalled her in some of the most intellectual, and consequently highest, qualities of novel writing. She drew character better than they did; she could give to details of every-day life a truth and a charm which she owed,

perhaps, to her Dutch blood, and which they never possessed; her dialogue was superior to theirs—in style, too, that charm of charms, she left them far behind. Yet the consummate skill of Madame de Genlis, the graceful tenderness of Madame Riccoboni, and the passion of Madame Cottin conquered her, and prevail over her to this day. Where Madame de Genlis exerted all her tact and art, Madame de Charrière was graceful and careless; and, worse still, when Madame Riccoboni, and, later, Madame Cottin, poured out their whole heart—the latter especially—and bore away the reader with that mighty tide, Madame de Charrière was reflecting, amiable, sceptical, and cold.

She had not the gift which imagination leaves to the most clear-sighted, a tender faith in invisible virtue and love. We miss in her writings the hope in some unknown good, the enthusiasm for some ideal, human or divine, without which nothing, not even a novel, can please or satisfy readers. They like, and have always liked, stories that bear a meaning within them. Whether it be love, virtue, or even vice, a meaning the tale must have, not a purpose, that would spoil any story. But Madame de Charrière's tales are deficient in purpose, moral, or meaning; they are delightful introductions to some tale

that never comes. We see the promise—the fulfilment escapes our view. A delicate mind must prize them, for they are exquisite sketches; but the oblivion or the indifference of the majority is their fate.

Madame de Charrière's life is like her works: it opens fairly, and ends in disappointment. With birth, beauty, wealth, and wit, with no indifference to society or fame, she married a commonplace man, spent her life in French-Switzerland, far from that brilliant centre of thought, Paris, and acted no part worth noting in the politics, society, or literature of her day. Was that want of ardour and faith which is the defect of her works, also the fault of her nature —and could she not believe in herself enough to command that success which Fortune rarely grants to the indifferent and the cold? We know so little of her, save in her last wearied years, that we can scarcely answer that question with truth.

Even the exact date of Madame de Charrière's birth is not known. M. de Sainte Beuve conjectures that Mademoiselle Isabelle A. E. Van Tuyll Van Serooskerken Van Zuylen—such were her alarming names—was born towards the year 1740. She was of noble origin, and moved in the highest society of Holland. French she knew

from her childhood, and she spoke and wrote it well. Her familiar letters to her mother and her relatives are all in French; and the very first—those she wrote when she was emerging from childhood into youth—have the easy, rapid, and lively style she preserved to the last. They also bear traces of an ironical spirit, of a familiar scepticism, that do not promise future happiness.

Her country and her countrymen she held in little respect, and laughed at them in French: a fatal sign and a bad beginning. English, too, she knew, and her visit to England, in 1766-7, gave the tone to some of her best works. Some of her criticisms, for criticise she must, have been preserved:—

"You would be surprised to see beauty without grace, fine figures that cannot curtsey, ladies of the first virtue looking like grisettes, and much splendour and little taste. It is a strange country. There are in our neighbourhood six women separated from their husbands, and I have dined with a seventh."

Under the date of March, 1767, she wrote:—

"Nothing astonished me in London; but during the last fortnight I saw several seats that surprised and charmed me: even in the beginning of March, it is a hundred times beyond all that

I have seen elsewhere in the most favourable season. But, dear aunt, would you admire new ruins? It is all beautifully imitated: the gaps, the slits, the colour, the loose stones, the real ivy that covers half the old building, are all perfect, and could be taken for the reality, but are not. One knows it is all new, and I am surprised at the fancy and admire the imitation, without being able to say that this sort of ornament pleases me. I will have no ruins in my garden, lest I should be laughed at. These ruins are very fashionable. The age and country are free. Some are Gothic, others Greek, others Roman. My mother, who is so fond of old buildings, would prefer Windsor Chapel, with the banners of the knights, and their complete suits of armour. I dropped a deep curtsey to that of the Black Prince."

This lively lady was not far from her thirtieth year when she married M. de Charrière, her brother's tutor. She had a dowry of a hundred thousand florins, and might have contracted a more brilliant alliance. The Baron d'Hermenches, the Marquis de Bellegarde, a Prince of Anhalt, Lord Wemyss, had been amongst the suitors for her hand: why they were rejected and M. de Charrière was accepted, we are not told. Perhaps the temptation of an almost French home had something to do with the more

than half-French Mademoiselle Van Tuyll's choice.

We doubt if her married life was very happy; but could she have ever been happy? Even authorship came late, and yielded her but its most autumnal joys. She was forty-four when she published her first work, "Les Lettres Neufchâteloises," suggested to her by what she saw and knew of Neufchâtel life in her summer abode of Colombier. The work was attacked, but it was in some degree successful. It was followed by others, but "Caliste" alone, as we gather from Madame de Charrière's letters, paid its expenses, and so slight was the hold she possessed on her cotemporaries that a complete list of her works does not exist. Her last tales never appeared in French, and were merely written to be translated into German. The land and literature she despised were more hospitable to Madame de Charrière than those she had adopted.

She had reached her forty-seventh year, and she was on a visit to M. and Madame Necker in Paris, when she met in their house a dissipated, ennuyé young man of twenty, whose name as connected with hers has done more to compel the attention of biographers than any other event in her quiet life.

Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, a Swiss by

birth, a Frenchman by origin, as well as in temper and feeling, was, from the beginning of his remarkable career to its close, subject to feminine influences as varied as they were powerful. Like all sensitive men who have lost their mothers in youth—his died at his birth—he seemed impelled to seek in woman the friendship and tenderness home deprived of its great charm could no longer yield. In Madame de Charrière he found friendship tender and indulgent; a charming mind, just sceptical enough to suit his, and that seduction which the remains of beauty give to a woman at every age. For a time she was all-powerful. Then he married a German, Wilhelmina, whom he soon divorced; then came the reign of Madame de Staël, fervent and stormy; then a second marriage, of which we know little, and, last of all, when Benjamin Constant was fifty, when he seemed to have exhausted every passion, even gambling, and every political opinion—for he had passed through all—the mystic, penitent Madame de Krüdener helped to soothe the passionate sorrow caused by the inexorable beauty of Madame Récamier.

That Madame de Charrière was his first genuine friend, the first who exercised real influence over him, is certain. Her years did not allow the feeling that bound them to go beyond friendship;

but it had much of the exclusiveness of love, and some of its jealousy, too. Its fervour was short-lived. For who and what could have long charmed a heart like that of Benjamin Constant?

There is a precocity which is fatal to virtue and happiness, for it is not that of the intellect, but of the whole being. Such was Benjamin Constant's. At twelve, he wrote letters as world-worn as if he had been thirty. Yet his boyhood was wilful and indolent. His tutor, discovering that open means of instructing him were not likely to be successful, adopted stratagems, against which the boy's penetration was not proof. He gravely proposed the invention of a new language. Benjamin eagerly consented; the professor found him the alphabet, and no doubt helped him with the words, since the language thus invented was Greek.

Happiness was not likely to be the lot of one so perverse. After a dissipated life in Paris, he went off to England with a few guineas in his pocket; thence he wrote half-polite, half-ironical letters to Madame de Charrière. On his return to Lausanne he was rather sharply received by his family, and took refuge at Madame de Charrière's country home, Colombier.

Two pleasant months he spent there; but the friends were too much alike to be long happy.

They began by exchanging notes from their apartments in Colombier, by writing weekly after their first separation, then a bitter and insolent letter of Benjamin's broke their correspondence for a while. It was resumed, but never with the old warmth. Benjamin Constant's passion for Madame de Staël pained and annoyed Madame de Charrière, who called her the talking machine. Her letters to Benjamin Constant became scarce, and she complained that he left them unanswered, and lost the MSS. she sent him. He complained in his turn that her letters were all filled up with the errata in her works; and he is said to have spoken of her slightingly. And thus ended, in something worse than the silence in which so many friendships lie buried, a feeling which promised to be life-long, and which, with a little more faith on either side, might surely have lasted a life-time. But it was to Madame de Charrière that Benjamin Constant wrote, "I like poetry in no language." Would he have dared to write this to Madame de Staël? It was to her, even at Colombier, at the dawn of their friendship, in one of the familiar and affectionate notes sent from his room to hers, that he exclaimed, talking of mankind, "Poor little insects!—what is happiness or dignity?"

And to him a few years later, when he inquired

concerning the sequel to the pretty story of Cecile, in the "Letters from Lausanne," Madame de Charrière gave the following sad reply: "Where can I find some enthusiasm, some conviction that man can be worth something, that marriage can be a sweet, tender, and strong tie, instead of an uneven, heavy, and yet weak chain? Imagination withers on seeing all that is, or rather one thinks oneself mad for having felt the emotions of a few moments, at what might have been. The time of a certain romantic simplicity of heart was prolonged for me beyond the common lot; but can it always last, spite the aridity of my position?"

What illusion could there be in a friendship that used such language? None.

Madame de Charrière was attached to her young friend, forgave him constantly, and loved him to the last. He admired and appreciated her, and for years felt and expressed a friendship that was tender for him. But, alas! there were no illusions on either side, and even friendship cannot do without illusions. What Madame de Charrière thought of Constant we do not well know; she is generally thought to be the original of the following portrait taken from his bitter novel of "Adolphe."

"At the age of seventeen, I witnessed the death

of an elderly lady, whose remarkable and eccentric mind had helped to develope mine. Like many, she had, in the beginning of her career, stepped into life with the consciousness of a strong mind and of great intellectual powers; like many, too —and for having refused to bend to factitious but necessary conventionalities—she had seen her hopes destroyed, and her youth spent without pleasure. Old age had reached her at last, but had not subdued her. She resided in a château near our property. She led a dissatisfied and retired life. Her mind was her last resource; and she used it to analyze everything. For a year we contemplated life, under every aspect, in our endless conversations, and death as the only end of all; and after having so long talked of death with her, I saw death strike her before me."

There is more tenderness in Benjamin Constant's letter of farewell to Madame de Charrière, one of the last she received from him, and which he wrote on the eve of the journey to France which gave him a political career and a new country.

"Farewell! you who have made lovely eight years of my life; you whom, spite a sad experience, I cannot imagine either constrained or false; you whom I appreciate better than any will ever appreciate you! Farewell!"

Nine years after receiving this letter, Madame

de Charrière died, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, on the twenty-seventh of December, 1805. Her declining years were saddened by ill-health, and the loss of every illusion—both stoically borne. A year before her death, she wrote to a friend:—

"If you think that M. and Madame R. can give you news of us you are mistaken. Monsieur put some stupid questions to me whilst M. de Charrière was sleeping. After hearing him with a sort of surprise, I answered:—'All that I can tell you is, that M. de Charrière walks a good deal in the garden, reads part of the day, and plays every evening.'

"When I was young, I have repeated, a hundred thousand times, those verses, as I paced the château of Zuylen:—

'Un esprit mâle et vraiment sage,
Dans le plus invincible ennui,
Dédaigne le triste avantage
De se faire plaindre d'autrui.'

And I have not so far forgotten my lesson as to talk of myself to a Madame R. Scarcely can I make up my mind to mention my ailments to a physician; and when I talk of my melancholy to some one, I must be forced to do so by an excess of weariness which I might call despair. Only by the amusements in which I still indulge myself do I voluntarily betray my feelings."

Madame de Charrière's "Letters from Lausanne" are her claim to literary celebrity. It is an agreeably written but melancholy book; for it seems intended to prove that, whether returned or not, whether felt by the innocent maiden or the penitent sinner, woman's love is ill-fated. There is no despair, no pathetic or touching appeal to our feelings; but the inexorable truth is woven no less in the flirtation of which Cecile is victim than in the passion which causes all Calista's sorrows.

Calista has a story; Cecile has not. Hers is but one of the episodes of youth, and it is unfinished, imperfect, like a glimpse from the great drama of reality. It begins, but does not end; and there is the fault of Madame de Charrière's tales. They are sketches, not pictures. She lays down her pen precisely when we begin to feel interested; for then it was that her own interest in what she wrote ceased. Too clear-sighted and too cold to indulge her imagination in what is possible, and too sensitive to draw the gloomy picture of what is, she set her task aside and indulged herself in some new beginning, in some new promise of happiness and love, never to be fulfilled.

Spite the charm of the narrative, few books are so unsatisfactory as hers. Her characters are like

pleasant fellow-travellers, scarcely known when they go their own way, and leave us behind, solitary and dull.

What avails it that Cecile is a charming young girl? We get a few pages from her youth, we see her with her kind and indulgent mother, with the young lord, and the little pale minister and the middle-class and aristocracy of Lausanne; then she takes a journey to Languedoc—for the young lord has not spoken. Her heart is heavy and sad—we feel and know it; but we never see her again. No doubt that time consoles her—probably she marries, and is decently happy; but what can atone for the fact that we saw her just long enough to like her, and that when our feelings were interested in her favour she was capriciously withdrawn from our view.

The slight story is very vividly told by Cecile's mother, in a series of letters to a friend. The mother is sensible; the daughter pretty, good-humoured, but with more rectitude and judgment than finesse or elegance. She is fond of dancing—not too fond of pleasure—she is poor, too, yet has her admirers. But the prudent mother weighs them, and finds not one worthy of her Cecile. Her little cousin, the minister—pale, thin, sickly, pedantic, the pet of mother and aunts—who thinks himself, and is thought a genius, because

he writes bad verses, and preaches bad sermons, who wears goloshes, and shivers under the least breath of air, is no match for the gay, lively, and intelligent Cecile. Another minister, his friend—a fine, dashing young fellow, who goes out shooting, studies little, and preaches moderately—will not do either, though he, too, is smitten with Cecile. A third admirer, who belongs to the middle class, and has the vices of the aristocracy, is likewise set aside. A young tradesman, mild and honest, is not grand enough, for Cecile writes a "de" to her name. A young Bernese—good, handsome, and well off—remains; he is fond of Cecile. He would do very well, but Cecile has set her heart on a young English lord who boards with her cousin, the minister; and it is this girlish liking that we follow, from its dawn to its abrupt close. The anxious vigilance of a fond and penetrating mother is our guide; through her we see signs so slight that else they would escape every look.

These signs are slight, because the feeling, though real, is calm and natural. It is young love—not violent or engrossing passion. No extraordinary or unusual incident draws it forth. Modesty, pride, a prudent mother's counsel, the lover's carelessness—everything, in short, conspires to subdue it. No well-bred, well-taught

girl could behave otherwise than Cecile behaves. She has just feeling enough not to be cold, and not too much to be singular, or to run the risk of being thought forward. The whole story of that little innocent flirtation is told with exquisite delicacy and finesse. The young lord—he goes by no other name—now comes forward, now draws back, not that he means to trifle with Cecile, but because he likes her more or less, according to her coldness or her involuntary preference. When he is in her favour—and he sees it—his love grows cool, for he does not want to marry. When she is shy and reserved, he is sorry, for he likes her at heart, and his only feeling is to win back her liking. At length Cecile has the good sense to withdraw from the unequal contest. She goes to the country with her mother, and thence proceeds to Languedoc—whilst the young lord pursues his travels with a very melancholy friend, who relates to Cecile's mother the story called "Caliste."

Thus ends the "Letters from Lausanne"—the story of a brief though interesting struggle between man's coldness and woman's pride and finesse; but in which, as is usual, the colder of the two conquers. The young lord never speaks of love, but he goes as far as a man may go, without venturing on that dangerous ground. He teaches Cecile chess—and lessons of all sorts are dangerous.

"They looked like two children," writes the mother; "and more so than ever on that evening. My daughter was continually committing mistakes, which gave birth to jokes as merry as they were indifferent. Once the little lord was provoked with her want of attention, and Cecile was vexed with his impatience. I saw they were sulking, and shrugged my shoulders. A while after, no longer hearing them, I looked up. The hand of Cecile lay motionless on the chess-board, her head was slightly bent forward, her eyes were downcast. The young man also bent towards her—seemed to devour her with his looks. It was the oblivion of all—ecstacy, complete forgetfulness.

"'Cecile,' I softly said, for I did not want to frighten her, 'what are you thinking of?'

"'Nothing,' she replied, hiding her face in her hands, and abruptly pushing back her chair. 'I think that wretched chess fatigues me. For some time, my lord, I have been getting more and more perplexed, and you would only have more reason to complain of your pupil. Let us put it by.'

"She rose, left the room, and did not return till I was alone. She knelt, leaned her head against me, and taking both my hands, she bathed them with tears.

"'My Cecile, what is it?' I asked; 'what is it?'

"'I must put that question to you, mamma. What is passing in me? What have I felt? Of what am I ashamed? What am I crying for?'

"'Did he perceive your emotion?' I asked.

"'I do not think so, mamma," she answered; 'sorry perhaps for the impatience he had betrayed, he pressed and kissed the hand with which I was lifting one of the fallen chessmen. I withdrew my hand; but I felt so glad that he was no longer vexed, his eyes seemed so tender. I felt so moved. It was then you softly said, 'Cecile, Cecile!'"

The mother is all indulgence; yet she gives her daughter some prudent advice; the upshot of which is that a woman cannot too carefully guard her heart from her lover's view, and that the young lord cannot be kept at too great a distance. Cecile finds the lesson hard, but she obeys it.

But it leads to nothing. The distinction between a girl's love and that of a young man is nicely shown. Hers would ripen into the true woman's affection; his is cold from its very dawn, and would never be manhood's passion or steady love. The mother sees it, and takes Cecile away. They go to the country. Compassion for the poor and the suffering does Cecile good; even a stray dog starving, and all but dead of want and cold, can take up her thoughts, and give relief to

her kind heart. Hence the very beautiful reflection uttered by her mother, and in which we might all find food for meditation :—

"Instead of reasoning, instead of moralizing, give something to love to one who loves. If love is the peril, love will be the safeguard; if love causes the grief, love will give the consolation; to the heart that loves, and knows how to love, love is the only business, the only task, the only pleasure of life."

"Calista," the history of a melancholy gentleman who travels with the young lord, is an impressive tale — one of the saddest and most searching a woman ever wrote.

The heroine, a beautiful English girl called Calista, for having appeared one night in the part of the "Fair Penitent," is basely sacrificed by her unworthy mother. She is almost a child, and sin surrounds her before conscience and pride have awakened. The tenderness of Lord M——, the delicacy with which he treats her, leave her the charm, though not the reality, of innocence; and at his death Calista, still young, beautiful, accomplished, virtuous and good by nature, is doomed to the lifelong misery of a name disgraced, and to the sting of secret shame.

It is then that she meets a lover, the friend of the young lord—for he is known by no other

name. They are at first deluded by the sweet semblance of friendship; but he learns that she loves him, and in a transport of joy he kneels at her feet. Bitter and sad is her exclamation:—

"I know love now that it is too late! Ah! what a position is mine! The less I deserve respect, and the more I need it, I should see an insult in all that might prove love. The least infraction to the laws of the severest reserve would terrify and humble me, make me remember with horror what I have been—what renders me unworthy of you in my own eyes, and in yours, no doubt—what I will not, what I must never become again. Ah! I have known the price of a stainless life and reputation only since I know you. How often have I wept on seeing a girl—ay, even the poorest, but virtuous, or even merely innocent! Had I been like her, I would have given you my life, and been your servant. You could have married, for I should have been known to you alone. I would have served your wife and your children, and I would have set my pride in being thus completely your slave—in doing, in bearing all for you. But what can I do—what can I suffer? Known and degraded, I can be neither your equal nor your servant. You see that everything has occurred to me. For a long time I have but one thought—to love you; and

the grief and joy there is in loving you! By telling you how much I love you I have, at least, given myself one moment of happiness."

Woful is the love that must begin with such confessions. Calista neither blinds herself nor attempts to deceive him. She warns him to leave her whilst he can do so with honour; or if he remains, to be faithful and true, and yet expect nothing. He stays, loves her a little while, then wearies, without exactly ceasing to love her. A parting follows—sad but inevitable conclusion.

All this is very simply told. There is no exaggeration, no paradox, no undue sympathy with the fallen, no justification of wrong, no accusation against society and her laws; and yet, by a masterpiece of skill, all our sympathies are with the beautiful sinner, all our indignation is against the man whose respect for a father's authority and prejudices prevents him from giving his name to a beloved but dishonoured woman. Why is this? Perhaps because with Calista there is both goodness and truth, and that with her lover there is nothing but weakness—shameful and miserable weakness. Her love is a great love; his is pusillanimous, and fatal to its object.

When a man has the misfortune—and it is a great one—to love a fallen woman, he cannot love her too boldly, too courageously. The more she

is sunk in the world's esteem, the more must she stand high in his. If his love be not an altar on which she is adored, it is nothing. It no longer honours—alas! it only degrades her.

It is for not having felt this that we hold Calista's lover in such little worth. She warned him that she would never be his mistress, that he might find it too hard to call her his wife. How then can we absolve the man who accepts this love, and is faithless to it? A firm mind and a true heart would have withdrawn at once, or at once have said, "Be my wife. Neither your pride nor my love will allow any other tie between us. Be mine, and all mine." He does neither. He says he would marry her if his father consented; and what father, looking at the matter with calm, unprejudiced eyes, would consent. But no sense of tenderness or respect causes him to shrink from the prospect of an unworthy tie. Her pride and her virtue, tardy but true, are her only safeguards.

In the bitterness of her wounded pride, Calista takes a resolve, which, so vacillating and weak is his love, he does not oppose, and scarcely suspects. A wealthy country gentleman, who knows her past life, who visits her daily, asks her to become his wife. Calista hopes a while that the man she loves will endeavour to prevent this—that when

she has left he will follow and recall her, and claim her his for ever. He does not. He is struck with grief and dismay at her departure, but there he stops, and she becomes the wife of another.

His own marriage, with a modish and light widow, follows, to his father's great joy. But Lady Betty, stung at her husband's coldness, becomes indiscreet; and the proud man who would not call Calista his daughter must needs overlook the misconduct of the fashionable lady. Thus all are punished: the father in his pride, the son in his weakness, Calista in her heart.

For she was not true to love—why did she marry? Not to make her husband happy, be happy herself, or secure the world's respect. The woman who has been wrecked in the great venture of life, and to whom esteem can no longer give happiness or love, is scarcely so worldly. Calista's marriage is an act of revenge, delicate and refined, against her cold lover. She does not exactly marry to vex him, but to place between him and her an inexorable barrier. He knew not how to break through the world's trammels for her sake—every one of those fair but heavy chains shall now weigh upon him, and divide him from her for ever. In this, resentment leads her beyond the laws of true dignity. Is marriage with her lover's rival a neglected woman's only refuge?

Even though slighted and contemned, has she within her secret heart no home where she can bury the past, and through sorrow and endurance reach a divine future, not of oblivion, but of peace?

But, to say the truth, Calista, though noble and good, is something like Madame de Charrière herself—a sceptic of the eighteenth century. This world, whether harsh or good, is her future. To this world she turns for comfort in tribulation. It is her great resource, her universal panacea—too clear-sighted to be quite deceived, too human not to yearn for consolation, she does what would be wise enough if she were colder: she marries. But a fainting-fit, on learning her lover's marriage with Lady Betty, alienates her husband for ever. Wounded in his pride, he does not reproach his wife, but his cold resentment stings her to the quick. There is no quarrel, no *éclat*, but Calista leaves her husband's house, and comes to London. The uncle of her first lover, old Lord M———, is ill, and requires her care.

Thus, alone, sad, and prostrate with a double grief, Calista goes one evening to the play. The "Fair Penitent" is to be acted, and she feels a bitter and tormenting pleasure in seeing once more all that decided her unhappy destiny. Her lover is near her. What sorrow, what transports in that meeting! These two shipwrecked mariners,

for a moment, indulge in the thought of flying from the scene of their miserable ruin. They have left the theatre—they stand alone, on a stormy night, in Saint James's Park—there is none to see, none to hear, there is not even the consciousness of day and heaven to check a guilty and desperate thought.

"Passing her arms around me, she said: 'What shall we do without each other? In half an hour I shall be as I was a year ago—as I was six months back—as I was this morning! What shall I do if I have still some time to live? Shall we go away together? Have you not obeyed your father enough? Have you not taken the wife he chose for you?—have you not got a child? Ah! let us resume our true ties. Whom shall we injure? My husband hates me; he will no longer live with me. Your wife no longer loves you. Ah! do not answer!' she exclaimed, putting her hand on my lips; 'do not refuse—but do not consent, either. I have only been unhappy as yet, let me not become guilty. My own sins I might bear, but not yours. I should never forgive myself for having degraded you. Ah! how unhappy I am—how much I love you! Never was man loved as you are!' And holding me closely clasped, she shed a torrent of tears. 'I am an ingrate,' she said, after a while, 'for nothing

on earth would I give the pleasure I have felt to-day—I feel this moment.'

"The thunder was frightful now, and the sky seemed on fire. Calista seemed to hear and to feel nothing; but James, running up to her, said:

"'In the name of heaven, madam, come!—there are hailstones falling, and you have been so ill.'

"Taking hold of her arm, he led her to the cab, made her enter it, and closed the door upon her. I remained alone in darkness: I never saw her again."

He travels, and Calista dies. She dies forgiven by her husband, and almost loved by the father of her lover. She dies, not of love—it rarely kills—but of what is often fatal—a wronged love, a wasted life. She dies, and thus ends the tale. The lover's grief we never witness—we need not; we know what it will be—weak, tardy, though sincere. He is of those for whom was framed the old familiar phrase—Too late. Too late in love, in duty, in grief, in all that proves a man.

CHAPTER VI.

MADAME DE KRÜDENER.

THE life of Madame de Krüdener is one of the most curious psychologic studies within the whole range of biography. The subtlety with which this singular and imaginative woman slipped away from good into evil, and scarcely knew the difference; the rapidity with which she rose from evil to good, from the merest worldliness to the highest religious aspirations, and to some of the most noble of religious virtues, self-denial and charity, are such as almost baffle analysis. This mysterious faculty of escaping from harm, like a bird from the net of the fowler, certainly bespeaks an original excellence of nature. Why is it darkened by a shadow of insincerity, a shadow so strange and deep that doubt and mistrust, once wakened, can never sleep again, that we pause

and question even whilst we needs must admire. We want the test known to the Searcher of all hearts alone, the touchstone that will tell us when to believe and honour, when to turn away with sorrow and pity.

We know, indeed, that the lives of human beings are all made up of complex materials, that warp and woof are seldom of equal value. Yet some do give us a fair or a solid texture; a web that will stand the wear of time, charm away censure by its splendour and beauty, or defy it by its sober strength. In Madame de Krüdener's life we look in vain for either. There is nothing to dazzle the imagination, nothing to conquer esteem. Her literary claims have been more injured than benefited by what we know of her. The kindness and charity that were substantial in her religion, have been obscured by what was visionary and unreal. She passed through life, a mystic and a dreamer, and by her side walked the glorious illusions of prophetic gifts and divine revelations; but we might as well look at noonday for the mists of the morning, as now seek her trace in religious story. Her high birth and her rank, the friendship of a great sovereign in critical times, gave her a momentary importance in the eyes of her cotemporaries. On posterity Madame de Krüdener's claims are slight and chiefly lite-

rary. Her only good novel, "Valérie," is not an original work—it is but one of a school; but as representing the feminine element in that school it is both valuable and interesting. Its own merits have long made it a popular story, apart from such considerations.

Barbe Julie de Wietinghoff was born at Riga on the 21st of November, 1764. Her father was descended from the Teutonic knights, her mother was the daughter of Marshal Münich. Both possessed great vigour of mind and energy of character M. de Wietinghoff, though so proud of his ancient birth that he disdained titles, also scorned poverty. He became a commercial man, and was soon one of the wealthiest men in Livonia. His wife, a beautiful and remarkable woman, seconded him well. In the morning she was the most exemplary of housekeepers, and in the evening the most seducing of fashionable ladies. M. de Wietinghoff loved splendour and pleasure—he had a private theatre, which he afterwards sold to the town; but not before his example had borne its fruits, and many of the great people of Riga had launched into magnificence which ended in the ruin he was prudent and prosperous enough to avoid.

Julie's education was much neglected, rich and luxurious though her parents were. She was

taught French and German from her infancy, and she had seen France, Germany, and England before she was sixteen, but she knew nothing. She was considered marriageable, however, and by the time of her return to Riga she was betrothed to a nobleman whose lands, being close to M. de Wietinghoff's, made Julie's father consider him admirably calculated to become her husband. She thought differently, but her feelings were not consulted. In her despair she turned to God and prayed for the first time. Heaven seemed to hear her. She took the measles, and long remained disfigured; the match was broken off, and two years later she was united to M. de Krüdener.

Julie was then eighteen; she was not beautiful; but extremely attractive. She had an exquisite figure, beautiful arms, beautiful fair hair and blue eyes, an expressive countenance and perfect grace, that charm beyond all others. M. de Krüdener was twenty years her elder. He was a man of education and taste, a diplomatist, and an agreeable man of the world; but he had not been fortunate in marriage. Julie was his third wife, and his two first he had divorced. Mademoiselle de Wietinghoff was not asked how she liked him for a husband—but she did not pray against him; and she confessed later to her friend, Bernardin

de Saint Pierre, that since she could not consult her heart, she was pleased to have found a man who could occupy her mind and gratify her vanity. She soon loved her husband passionately. In "Valérie," that tale which unfolds the best and purest portion of her youth, she has drawn him with much power and "grace." From his handsome and noble countenance to his calm though generous "heart," he is finely discriminated.

According to Madame de Krüdener, her husband had but one fault—he was ambitious; but his ambition was pure, and never interfered with duty. Many years after their marriage, when Paul the First was on the throne of Russia, M. de Krüdener was his ambassador at Berlin. He was giving a fête to his sovereign's daughter, the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg Schwerin, when he received despatches ordering him to declare immediate war on Prussia. The commands were unjustifiable and disastrous. M. de Krüdener resolved not to obey. He wrote to the Emperor, giving him his reasons, and steadily waited the event. His own ruin and that of his family, the loss of Imperial favour, Siberia perhaps, and a miserable exile, were among the probable consequences of his disobedience. For three weeks M. de Krüdener wore to all a smiling brow, and carried the weary burden of his secret; for three

weeks he never slept, and lived in the fever of suspense. At length the dreaded answer came. The Emperor was in a gracious mood. He thanked M. de Krüdener for the beautiful fête he had given his daughter, and until his death he loaded him with favours and gifts. The storm was averted, and had left a cloudless sky, but the terrible anxiety of those three weeks helped to shorten M. de Krüdener's life.

Such a man, with his intellectual superiority, and the godlike calmness of his affection, was made to subdue, charm, and torment a vain and ardent girl. His heart was tranquil and somewhat wearied. Love to him was peace, to his young wife it was fever. Her silent, unheeded youth had at length found an object. More eager than wise, she seized on it with transport. M. de Krüdener had wished for domestic happiness; instead of the longed-for blessing, he got the doubtful one of passion. Both paid the sad penalty of unequally matched years.

But at first they were happy. Young love was welcome, and calm love did not yet seem coldness. The Baron of Krüdener took some pains to cultivate his wife's natural talents. His efforts did not go deep, but they gave her the polish of a woman of the world. In 1784, her first child and son was born that same year she was pre-

sented to Catherine the Second, at St. Petersburgh, and she proceeded with her husband to Venice, where he represented the Russian Empress. A few years more, and Venice would cease to receive such Imperial visitors. Her palaces were to decay in her lagunes, her name was to be effaced from the golden book of nations. But then, if no longer great, she was still splendid. She gave to pleasure the days which had once been devoted to conquest and magnificent enterprise. She was the resort of the gay, the luxurious, and the wealthy: a very city of delights, soon to become a city of woe!

Madame de Krüdener's love for her husband was in all its fervour during this Venetian embassy. But it was too imaginative and too exacting an affection. She undertook long journeys to procure him fresh fruit and flowers, for which he cared little, and she thought him cold. He rode a spirited horse, and her terror found no sympathy with him. When he looked careworn, she wearied the vexed statesman with unseasonable fondness. Yet he loved her truly, with honour, fidelity, and strength; but twenty fatal years divided him from this young creature, more tender than wise. She could not reach his sad gravity, and he could not go back to her childish tenderness. When they went in spring to La

Mira, a beautiful villa on the Brenta, Madame de Krüdener gave her husband one of those proofs of love which he particularly disliked. Alarmed at his not returning one stormy night, and convinced that he had perished in the swollen waters of the Brenta, she roused her servants and went to meet him. M. de Krüdener quietly returned, and he gently scolded his wife. "Alas!" she thought, "he would have gone to bed and slept!"

There is a contagious charm in love. The passion which M. de Krüdener received and returned so calmly, helped to waken in the heart of a beholder a passion which Madame de Krüdener, absorbed in her own feelings, did not suspect.

Alexander of Stakieff, M. de Krüdener's secretary, was so unfortunate, though most devotedly attached to his patron, as to fall desperately in love with his wife. He left Venice, thinking absence the only cure; but they met again at Copenhagen—for, after eighteen months, M. de Krüdener was removed from the dying republic to Denmark. M. de Stakieff found the mistress of his heart lovelier than ever, still devoted to her husband, but not so fondly. She lived for something besides M. de Krüdener; she mixed much in society; she was young, lovely, and admired. A passion for flattery, and the love of display, had succeeded to love.

The shawl dance was one of her triumphs. We have two descriptions of that performance—one in "Delphine," by Madame de Staël, who witnessed it later; the other in "Valérie," by Madame de Krüdener herself. We give this first. It is the lover who speaks. "Valérie asked for a shawl of dark blue muslin. She parted her hair from her forehead, and put the shawl on her head; it fell down to her shoulders, concealing her hair, and giving her forehead the antique cast. Her lids fell, her smile faded away, her inclined head, her folded arms, that blue garment, and her pure, meek face looked like a painting of Correggio's, meant for tranquil resignation; and when she looked up, when her lips tried to smile, she looked like Shakespeare's Patience 'smiling at Grief.' . . . . Sometimes like Niobe she drew a stifled cry from my soul, torn by her grief. Sometimes she fled like Galatea, and my whole being seemed borne away with her light footsteps. No, I can give you no conception of my frenzy, when, in this magic dance, a moment before it ended, she fled, or rather flew round the room, looking round behind her, half timid, half afraid, as if pursued by love."

Madame de Staël's description is scarcely less enthusiastic.

"Never have grace and beauty produced a more

extraordinary effect on a numerous assembly. This foreign dance has a charm of which nothing that we have seen can give a fair idea. It is a thoroughly Asiatic mixture of indolence and vivacity, of sadness and mirth. Sometimes, when the music became softer, Delphine walked a few steps, with head inclined and arms folded, as if memory and regret suddenly came and mingled with the splendour of the fête; but suddenly resuming her light and lively dance, she wrapped herself in an Indian shawl, which set off her figure, and fell back with her long hair, making of her whole person a most exquisite picture."

M. de Stakieff saw clearly that the fond and innocent young wife he had known in Venice was altering fast. Yet his passion was still strong enough to make him leave Copenhagen. He wrote to M. de Krüdener confessing it, but adding a declaration which showed how ideal and pure was his love. "It is inexplicable, yet it is true, that I adore her because she loves you. If you could be less dear to her, she would become a woman like another, and I should cease loving her."

M. de Krüdener imprudently showed this letter to his wife. Her vanity was inflamed at having inspired a passion so romantic. Why should not other Alexander Stakieffs kneel and adore! She was in this dangerous frame of mind when, shortly

after the birth of her second child, a daughter, her health compelled her to leave Copenhagen, in 1789. She went to Paris, ran up a bill of twenty thousand francs with Mademoiselle Bertin, the fashionable milliner, and then proceeded to the south of France. There she met with a M. de Frègeville, a handsome French officer, who saw her, loved her, and, unhappily, made her share his passion. He accompanied her to Germany, but she went alone to Denmark. She there told her husband all that had passed, and asked for a divorce. M. de Krüdener refused, and left her sorrow-stricken. She went to her mother's at Riga, and soon afterwards parted from M. de Frègeville at Berlin. He pursued his career as a soldier, and died a general. They met no more. This was the end of a passion to which Madame de Krüdener had sacrificed her husband's affection and her self-esteem. Not long after this she saw Alexander de Stakieff: a sad and humiliating meeting for both, and which was never renewed.

In the year 1792, Madame de Krüdener was reconciled to her husband; but happiness was gone for ever. She had grown restless, wilful, and capricious. Her husband could not prevail upon her to be punctual—a fault which, with her literary propensities, cost her the favour of Frederick William the Third of Prussia, at whose court M. de

Krüdener was ambassador. She left him to travel: Germany, France, Switzerland, attracted her irresistibly. Once she went off without consulting her husband. He wrote her a sad and indulgent letter on this new separation, which his death made final. The news reached her in 1802, in Paris, where her literary career had begun. Châteaubriand, Benjamin Constant, Madame de Staël, were her friends; Michaud and Bernardin de St. Pierre were both friends and advisers. It was in Paris that she completed "Valérie," begun in Berlin. For some time the grief and remorse caused by her husband's death made her forget all else. But time effaced those feelings. Lyons, to which she had retired, became narrow. Ashamed of returning to Paris, after having solemnly forsaken that city of pleasure, she took singular means of effecting her object—means which throw a sad light on the real nature of this subtle and uncompromising lady.

Madame de Krüdener could not exist without a court, and among her courtiers was a Docteur Gay, whose compliant temper induced her to entrust him with the following delicate errand. Docteur Gay was requested by Madame de Krüdener to write some prose or poetry in her praise, to address it to "Sidonie," the heroine of one of her tales, and cause it to be inserted in a news-

paper. She told him what to say about her charms, her talents, her grace, her wit, and her shawl-dance. Vanity was not, could not, be her object. He knew her modesty; it was to be merely a summons to "Sidonie" not to bury such gifts in obscurity, but to return and adorn Paris with her presence. Docteur Gay complied. The elegy, as it was called, appeared. "Sidonie" was gratified. "The world is so stupid," she wrote to Docteur Gay, "that it is this charlatanism which brings one forward, and enables one to serve one's friends." The last hint is clear. But charlatanism is a two-edged sword. It is the chastisement of deceivers that they are deceived. The net they cast over others encloses them in its subtle meshes. This false praise intoxicated Madame de Krüdener. Speaking of Madame de Staël, she wrote: "I suspect the dear woman to be jealous; especially now that some of the graces, some of the charms of 'Sidonie' have been recognized in 'Delphine.' She liked me well enough formerly to paint the talent" (this is an allusion to the shawl-dance), "which she has drawn so well. But celebrity and too much success have made her grow cool."

Poor Madame de Krüdener! Thinking that Madame de Staël, one of the finest geniuses that ever wrote—one of the frankest, most generous, and least envious of women—could, in her own

splendid and European fame, envy the little murmur of renown that "Sidonie" awoke in Paris! Alas! why are letters kept when they contain such humiliating confessions?

Yielding to the ardent summons of her *unknown* admirers, Madame de Krüdener returned to Paris, writing letters to other friends, in which she expressed her own personal reluctance to enter once more on gay scenes of which she was weary. Yet it must be confessed there was always a sort of candour in her deceit. "You know," she wrote to her daughter, "that wit, genius, and good intentions do not suffice for success. There must be charlatanism in everything."

"Valérie" appeared towards the close of 1803. Madame de Krüdener had a splendid connexion in the Parisian literary world, and her own exertions were great. She drove about Paris several days running, and visited all the fashionable milliners to ask for ribands, coiffures, scarfs, and ornaments *à la Valérie*—an ingenious way of advertising a novel. After being a beauty and a woman of fashion, Madame de Krüdener became a popular authoress—for "Valérie" was a successful book, and though her other works are forgotten, they had their day. But a greater change was in store for her. She went to Riga to see her mother; and she was standing at her window one autumn

morning, when a Livonian gentleman—one of her former admirers—passed by and bowed to her. In the act he staggered, and fell—a dead man!

A terror that verged on insanity took possession of Madame de Krüdener. Her passion for admiration rose before her as a deliberate insult to Almighty Majesty. The judgment of God seemed hanging above her doomed head. Night was odious to her; day was spent in strange fears. She would not leave the house lest death should overtake her beyond its limits. Her windows were closed, that the light of day might not remind her of existence. These terrors gave way to time, but a deep and settled melancholy replaced them.

It so chanced that she needed the presence of a shoemaker of Riga. She was struck with this man's happy and cheerful face, and could not help saying to him,

"Friend, are you happy?"

"The happiest of men," was his answer.

She made no rejoinder, but that reply haunted her the whole night long. The next morning she went to the shoemaker's abode, resolved to learn the cause of his happiness. The shoemaker was one of the Moravian Brethren. His discourse filled Madame de Krüdener with joy and peace. From that time forward she gave to God the

ardour she had so feverishly bestowed on the world and its pursuits. We have now another woman before us—a mystic and a prophetess.

She was laughed at: it was natural that such a transformation should not inspire confidence or respect. Yet, sincere she certainly was, though her own estimate of her piety is not to be trusted. Madame de Krüdener was always a self-deceiver. To feel good and to be good she thought one. Her letters constantly betray this sad confusion. This most worldly of worldly women had convinced herself, and wanted to convince others, that "she liked simple and easy pleasures, quiet friends, and an even life." She carried those illusions to their farthest limit. In the fervour of her passion for M. de Frègeville, she contemplated devoting herself to M. de Krüdener, to the kind and forgiving husband whom she forsook, and left to die alone. She could even unite sin and a sort of piety; the meanest artifices and the enthusiasm of prayer. She always considered herself specially favoured by Heaven, and attributed to that favour the affection the Emperor Paul showed M. de Krüdener after he had forgiven her. She thought it, and she wrote it to a friend:—"I say it in the humility of my heart—for you know I have no pride—could a Christian be proud?—I believe that God has wished

to bless my husband since I have come back to him. He is laden with favours. Why should I not believe that a pious heart, praying to Heaven with simplicity and trust to help it to contribute to the happiness of another, should not be heard?" Such was always Madame de Krüdener's opinion of herself. She was a miserable sinner; she said it, but she also thought herself a chosen vessel of Heaven's mercies.

Yet this mystic part of her life, though full of errors, is singular and interesting. She had always been charitable, because she was both generous and kind-hearted; but when she had given herself entirely to God, His poor—that precious inheritance which is as the Kingdom of God upon earth, and which we so often despise or forget—became infinitely dear to her. She visited Germany in 1806. Prussia was distracted by a cruel war; the hospitals were full of wounded soldiers. Conquering her natural horror of pain and disease, Madame de Krüdener visited them assiduously. She thus met the Queen of Prussia, that beautiful and ill-fated lady whom the sorrows of her country sent to a premature grave. Madame de Krüdener's biographer asserts that a warm though brief and secret friendship was the result of this meeting.

From Kœnigsberg Madame de Krüdener pro-

ceeded to Carlsruhe, and took up her abode in the family of Jung Stilling. Here, though she devoted herself to the poor, she found time for literary composition. She wrote "Othilde," which she read to Queen Hortense, and which, after its publication four years later, she thus commended to her attention through Mademoiselle Cochelet, "Oh! how you would like that work! It has been written with heaven. That is why I venture to say that there are beauties in it."

But she soon wearied of this calm existence and commonplace piety. Her life, as a woman of the world, had been remarkable for the substitution of her own will and pleasure to principle; and her life, as a woman devoted to Heaven, was to be singular for the substitution of her own impulses to the simplest exercise of judgment. With that valuable quality, Madame de Krüdener was, indeed, never acquainted. Many gifts she had, but this crowning grace of all was wanting.

Jung Stilling had imbibed some of the principles of Swedenborg. Madame de Krüdener seized on them with ardour. Her friend introduced her to the admirable Oberlin, the pastor of the Ban de la Roche, who is said to have been a seer, but whom the invisible world never took away from the plain and arduous duties of this life. Madame de Krüdener wanted a teacher

more mystic and singular than this good man. She found him in Frederic Fontaine, a German pastor of French origin, who had the name of performing miracles, and who kept a somnambulist, Maria Kummrin, in his house. In one of her trances Maria foretold that Madame de Krüdener was to work many marvels in the kingdom of God, and designated Fontaine as her apostle. The state of mind into which this revelation threw Madame de Krüdener appears in the following passage of one of her letters: "In the true sense of the word, have I experienced miracles. I have been initiated into the deepest mysteries of eternity." If Madame de Krüdener was a dreamer, the pastor Fontaine was a practical man. An estate was bought in Würtemberg to found a Christian colony; but the king would not tolerate it, and Madame de Krüdener and her friends were allowed twenty-four hours to pack up and leave his dominions. This was but the beginning of a life-long persecution. Wherever she went, in kingdoms or in republics, Madame de Krüdener found that prejudice and dislike had been before her.

Her reputation as a prophetess began at Baden in 1814. The Queen Hortense visited that watering-place in that year; with her was Mademoiselle Cochelet, her old friend and schoolfellow.

This lady was sitting in her room, absorbed in unpleasant reflections on the fallen fortunes of the Bonapartes, when Madame de Krüdener walked in. Mademoiselle Cochelet was very much struck with the prophetic look of her visitor. Without seeming to notice this, Madame de Krüdener began to predict such heavy sorrows to Queen Hortense that Mademoiselle Cochelet exclaimed, "You frighten me! Why, what worse can happen her than what she has already undergone?"

"Oh! you do not know what a frightful year 1815 will be!" was the reply; "you think that the Congress will end. Be undeceived. The Emperor Napoleon will leave his island; he will be mightier than ever, but they who side with him shall be tracked, punished, persecuted. They shall not know where to rest their heads."

She spoke standing, and with vehement gestures. Her slight figure, her thinness, her flowing fair hair, her kindling eyes, had something supernatural that terrified the hearer. She called upon her after this, and saw another picture. Madame de Krüdener and her daughter lived in a small and lonely house near the Valley of Lichtenthal. In a poorly-furnished room there was but one ornament, a large wooden crucifix. It was early, yet mother and daughter had already devoted the morning to good deeds and charitable visits. A

little meat appeared on their frugal table, but it was in honour of the visitor that they broke so far through their homely fare. Everything around them spoke mild charity and gentle peace.

It was in the course of the same year that Madame de Krüdener's connection with the Emperor Alexander began. She foretold that he was to accomplish great things, and her predictions took a more definite form in a letter, dated Strasburg, October 27, 1814, and addressed to a Russian lady, Mademoiselle de Stourdza. In this letter, full of the saddest prophecies, occur the following passages: "We shall see guilty France, which, according to the decrees of the Eternal, was to be spared by the Cross that had submitted it, we shall see her chastised. . . . The storm is coming on those lilies which the Eternal had preserved—that emblem of a pure and frail flower that broke an iron sceptre—because the Eternal thus wished it; those lilies that should have called to purity, to love of God and repentance, have appeared to vanish." Towards the close of this letter, which Mademoiselle de Stourdza showed to the Emperor, Madame de Krüdener declared that she had much to say to him; but that her tidings were spiritual, and not political, is apparent from the terms she uses.

Alexander was very much struck with the fulfil-

ment of Madame de Krüdener's prophecy concerning the return of Napoleon from Elba. He was watching alone, one night, at Heilbronn, and thinking how the whole work of coalition was to be done again; he took his Bible, and tried to read, but could not; then he thought of Madame de Krüdener, whom he had never seen. "Would she were here, and I could hear her!" Scarcely had the wish arisen, when Madame de Krüdener was announced. She seemed sent by heaven itself. Her language, severe and eloquent, deepened this first impression. Alexander was a mystic, and he led the life of a voluptuary. He was handsome, amiable, and too weak to be happy in his sins. Madame de Krüdener's severity calmed the sting of his conscience. For three hours he heard her unwearied. A calmer and a gentler speaker would have failed where she succeeded. Thus began the brief but powerful influence this singular woman possessed over a mind akin to her own, though far less ardent.

But others besides the Emperor Alexander felt the charm. There is something beyond beauty, and which remains when beauty goes: it is the indescribable gift which is called grace; a something in which mind, person, and heart have a share. When Madame de Krüdener was a young and pretty woman, at Barèges, it was enough for

her to tie a handkerchief around her head for the man from whom she had purchased it to sell his whole stock. What she wore was becoming, and, later in life, what she said was winning and persuasive. Her enthusiasm, her ardour, were contagious. She preached love, and practised it with a charity that seemed boundless. To this we may add that her doctrines had a latitude which world-wearied or young and enthusiastic minds found sweet and attractive. On clear, straightforward, and positive minds Madame de Krüdener had no hold, but she could charm even those who did not recognise her power. Madame de Genlis was very much struck with her, and was convinced of her good faith. She called her an extraordinary and interesting woman, "who said the strangest things with convincing calmness."

A curious and interesting conversation, which Madame de Krüdener had with the Protestant pastor, Maurer, in 1817, gives a fair account of her religious tenets, and of her estimate of her own mission. The divinity of Christ, and salvation through his merits alone, was the foundation on which she built. This, as opposed to the Socinian doctrines which then, as now, pervaded Protestantism, she called the Doctrine of the Cross. The cross she named the banner of Chris-

tians, and declared that they who had ceased to confess it by the bending of the knee, had forsaken it. The worshippers of Jesus gathered at the foot of the cross constituted the true Church, and acknowledged no spiritual supremacy save that of Christ; no law save His will. The doctrine of good works she reproved, and declared that the true Church had ceased to exist since the third century. "She said that in the Roman Church the means of reconciliation between God and man, through the medium of Jesus Christ, had been well preserved, but petrified—without spirit or life—and that thus they were the work of Satan."

Of Protestantism she said: "But do you think I am a Protestant? Oh, no! I protest against Protestantism, which is but another deceit of Satan! I will quote, if you like, many passages from the New Testament against Protestantism."

An invisible church, which she called the Catholic, was the true one. That church and her own mission seem to have been one in her mind.

"I could prove my mission to you by all that the Lord has done to sanction it," she said; "He has caused me to predict events that have happened exactly as I said. Sick, pronounced incurable, have been cured at my prayer. With eighteen loaves, and a little barley soup, I fed

nine hundred famished persons. I prayed, and the blessing of the Lord penetrated this food, and rendered it sufficient."

M. Maurer, though not thoroughly convinced of the mission, was greatly touched with Madame de Krüdener's earnestness, eloquence, and amiable manners.

Her religion seems to have been especially faith in her own inspirations. She was a Protestant in her latitude of opinion, and a Catholic in some of her doctrines and practices. Veneration of the cross she held imperative. She told M. Maurer to kneel whenever he met one on his way. She assisted her own devotions with a crucifix; and she had frequent recourse to the intercession of that "Mary, full of grace," whom Protestantism has silently excluded. In one of her hymns, she asked her to pray "that the Lord might receive her in His mercy."

These mixed feelings helped to strengthen her hold on the Emperor Alexander. She could be everything to him, because she was nothing in particular. She followed him to Heidelberg, at his request. M. Empeytaz, a Genevese, who had embraced her tenets; her daughter, a beautiful and enthusiastic girl, and M. de Berckheim, her future son-in-law, assisted her in the task of guiding, spiritually, the head of the "Orthodox Church."

After the battle of Waterloo, Alexander went to Paris. Madame de Krüdener again followed him, by his wish. She lived in a hôtel contiguous to the palace of the Élysée, Alexander's abode.

The friendship of a powerful sovereign, the new faith which she preached, the readiness with which she spoke to all who applied to her, soon drew crowds around Madame de Krüdener. The sceptical and mocking Benjamin Constant, who had survived his passion for Madame de Staël, and was undergoing the bitterness of a hopeless love for the most beautiful of Frenchwomen, came to Madame de Krüdener for comfort. Madame Récamier, the cause of all his torment, was not so readily admitted to the prayer-meetings at which Madame de Krüdener presided, and where Alexander was often seen. This bewitching beauty was entreated not to be quite so beautiful, lest mere mortal loveliness should distract the worshippers.

The Holy Alliance, not, indeed, the political part of that ill-named combination, but the project of placing it under the influence of religious feeling, was the most remarkable result of Madame de Krüdener's connection with the Emperor. The original draft in Alexander's handwriting still bears Madame de Krüdener's corrections and erasures. The words "Holy Alliance" are in her hand.

If Madame de Krüdener had been an ambitious woman, she had found such an opening to power as might dazzle the proudest; but ambitious of political power she certainly was not. Alexander returned to Russia, and instead of following him, as had been agreed, she peregrinated through Switzerland, calling sinners to repentance, preaching, comforting, and relieving the crowds of famished poor, victims of the disastrous wars. Her progress through Switzerland is one of the most curious and interesting passages in her life. Such a tumult, social and religious, did it create, that she scarcely reached a canton or a city before the magistrates begged of her to depart. Hundreds and thousands congregated around her, and often followed her, claiming food, both spiritual and corporeal. Her zeal might well be offensive to many, but her boundless alms were no fit subject of reproach.

We cannot relate all the incidents that marked this part of Madame de Krüdener's career, but our task is drawing to a close, and of her charity we must speak once for all. It was both tender and magnificent, and we must search the lives of the saints to find anything like it. She was a rich woman, yet so far did her whole income go to the poor, that brown bread was often the only dinner to which she and her daughter, Juliette, sat down.

She did more than feed the poor, she really loved them. Once seeing, in Carlsruhe, a young servant girl crying as she swept the hall and door-steps of the house, and learning that shame at having fallen from a better station to this menial office was the cause of her tears, she took the broom from her hand, and, whilst the girl stared amazed, she said, "There is no shame in it. The Virgin Mary was the daughter of many kings, and she swept; and the son of God many a time took the broom from the hands of his mother, to lighten her task."

The tender and generous spirit of the middle-ages is in that homely teaching. It is still more apparent in the following touching instance of sisterly love. Amongst the poor who came to her for relief, whilst she was in Switzerland, was a poor woman, whose face, half eaten by a cancer, made even the other poor shrink from her. Madame de Krüdener, however, tenderly embraced her. Her daughter expostulated on the danger she thus ran.

"Do not scold me," replied her mother; "think for how many years this poor thing has been repelled by her fellow-creatures. She must know that Christians love their brethren."

Madame de Krüdener did not reach St. Petersburgh till the year 1821. The amiable but some-

what fickle Emperor had ceased to wish for her society. He had got alarmed at her notoriety, and was displeased at the scandal caused in Germany by the Pastor Fontaine, with whom she had been so long connected, and whose hypocrisy and vices were at length apparent to the world, and to Madame de Krüdener herself. Her ardour in urging him to embrace the cause of struggling Greece, the crowds who congregated around her, eager to hear and learn, were also distasteful to the Emperor.

The result was a coolness, and a hint to moderate her zeal. But silence was irksome to her. She left St. Petersburgh before the end of the year, and by a solitary life she prepared herself for death, which her failing health warned her to expect.

A milder climate was ordered for her; Princess Galitzin, her friend and admirer, who meant to found a sort of colony in her southern states, suggested the Crimea for a winter sojourn. It was reached after a long and fatiguing journey, but nothing could restore Madame de Krüdener's health, shattered by the unsparing exertions of twenty years. She expired on the 25th of December, 1824, in great peace and happiness of mind.

A few days before her end, she wrote to her son, in the following touching words:—

"What good I have done will remain, what I have done of evil (for how often have I not taken for the voice of God what was only the fruit of my imagination and my pride!) will be effaced by the mercy of my God. My numerous iniquities are all I have to offer God and man; but the blood of Jesus Christ will purify me from all sin."

CHAPTER VII.

"VALÉRIE."

GOETHE is said to have regretted that Madame de Krüdener, a Livonian by birth, should have written in French, and thus been lost to German literature. Apart from her merit, the great father of modern German fiction may have felt the flattery of such a work as "Valérie." There is indeed great beauty in this tale; and if it had not come after "The Sorrows of Werther"—if it had not evidently been suggested by that strange, feverish book—it would rank by right among the very highest works of its class. Yet an imitation it can scarcely be called, unless in one or two unfortunate respects, where it certainly does not improve on its model. It is founded on incidents in Madame de Krüdener's own life; on a pure and ideal passion which she had inspired; on the

memory of her early married life, and of her happy years in Italy—on all that can give reality to a story; and it is worthy of remark that, whilst it is true, it remains almost faultless. Error begins when, wandering from truth, the author ventures on imitation.

It is, as we have already said, a beautiful story, told with exquisite delicacy and great skill; but there is no doubt that the impression "Werther" left on Madame de Krüdener's mind gave it its tone and form; and, without wishing to deny her feeling for nature, we doubt if her descriptions would be so impassioned or so melancholy had she not read Bernardin de Saint Pierre and Châteaubriand. The wondrous brilliancy and freshness of the descriptions in "Werther"—that sense of a broad landscape, or of a wild fountain-nook, which Goethe could convey in a few words —are wanting in "Valérie;" but if northern scenery is described at some length, it is finely painted, and the wild shores of the Baltic, or the soft landscape over which bends an Italian sky, alike appear before us as we read. In "Werther" the interest rests on Werther himself. Charlotte has bright lips and dark eyes, she is handsome and good-natured; but we never read very far into her heart, we see her but through her lover's passion, and his testimony we are inclined to doubt.

Albert is cold and pedantic, and unpleasantly in the way. Werther, wild, mad, and guilty, alone interests. In "Valérie" the case is different. A young, charming, ideal, and strictly original being moves before us. She undergoes no heavy trials. She loves one man, and is loved by the other, yet she interests us more than either, because she is more skilfully painted. She is also more amiable. Her husband, too, is a much better portrait than Albert. He is thirty-seven, an ambassador; and his calmness, his serenity, and quiet dignity, suit his position and his years. Gustave, the lover, is the weak character of the story. In vain he loves, suffers, and dies; we ever turn from him to Valérie, the innocent cause of all his woe. When she disappears, and we are left alone with him and his passion, we grow impatient and weary.

It is difficult to analyse this simple tale; for though it is told at some length, a few words comprise its chief features; and the history of a suffering heart, which moves when gradually unfolded, loses all its charm when it is at once revealed. The Count of M——, a Swedish nobleman, is appointed ambassador in Venice. The days of the Republic are not yet over—for the events of the tale take place in the last century. He travels through Germany and Tyrol with his young wife, Valérie, and his *attaché*, Gustave de

Linar, who is also the son of an old and valued friend of his youth. Valérie is devotedly fond of her husband. He is handsome, accomplished, and good; and though he returns her tenderness, he returns it with a calmness which often grieves her, and which Gustave finds incomprehensible. In his eyes Valérie is both ideal and lovely. Young, ardent, and impassioned, Gustave venerates the Count as the first of men, but he adores his wife as the most enchanting of women. His filial love for the husband of Valérie, and his pure but tormenting passion for Valérie herself—a passion which daily intimacy feeds until it becomes a fever—the struggle between a friendship more powerful than duty, and a love all the more insidious that it comes in angel guise, are told with great simplicity, truth, and power, in his letters to an invisible friend in Sweden; for it is an epistolary novel, though Valérie herself—the charming, ideal Valérie — fortunately never pens a letter; and the heart of Gustave is laid bare before us from the unsuspected dawn of his ill-fated love to its close in the bosom of death, the final but sad comforter of all our sorrows. A languor of which he himself knows not the meaning, an impassioned sense of the wild, the beautiful in nature, a weariness of all things, prepare him for a love deep, unreturned, and hopeless—a love

which a lovely woman, devotedly fond of her husband, could best inspire; for the unhealthy restlessness of Gustave's mind is scarcely such as calm, innocent love could appease; and, charming though she be, we doubt if Valérie unwedded would have secured his feverish heart. The bond, the chain, the barrier, give activity and life to a love which liberty would probably have allowed Gustave to dream away.

Valérie, as he sees her with a lover's eye—pale, fair-haired, and ideal—is, however, an exquisite creature.

"I cannot better paint Valérie to you than by naming the young Ida, your cousin," he writes to his friend. "She is very like her; yet there is something in her I have seen in no woman as yet. It is possible to be as graceful as Valérie, and more beautiful than she is, and yet to be far from her. It is not so much that one admires her, as that there is in her something ideal and lovely which compels attention. She seems a thought, she is so delicate and so slight. I did not find her pretty the first time I saw her. She is very pale; and the contrast of her mirth, of her giddiness, with a countenance that seems made to express feeling, produced a strange impression upon me."

It is said to be dangerous to look at love, and that there is contagion in that fever of the heart,

Valérie is ardently fond of her calm husband. They are travelling, he crosses a forest alone, and fears for his safety make her betray to her young and susceptible companion a passion of which he had not thought this mere girl capable. The depths of his own heart are stirred.

"This day only have I learned to know Valérie. Until now she had passed before my outward vision like one of those pure and graceful outlines bequeathed to us by the Greek, and with which we clothe our dreams; but I thought her soul too young, too unformed, to divine or feel passion. My timid looks did not venture to read her features too closely. She was not a woman with the empire which her sex and my imagination could give her over me—she was a being beyond the limits of thought. That veil of veneration and respect which there is between the Count and me extended to Valérie, and I did not venture to raise it, lest I should see but a woman like another. But this day, this very day, a strange event has taught me that her soul is both ardent and deep. Ay, nature finished her handiwork; and, like those antique vases that fill us with wonder by their delicacy and whiteness, Valérie keeps within her bosom a subtle and ever-living flame."

This fair, delicate young creature of sixteen, whom even her lover discovers not to be faultless,

but who is irresistibly winning, soon acquires deep but unconscious power over his heart. At first his love seems more the love of a poet than that of a common mortal. It revels in poetic images and fancies, some of them exquisite in their way. He is travelling with Valérie and the Count through romantic Italian valleys. They alight to visit some ruins, and they find themselves in a quiet cemetery. The delicious breath of an Italian spring is in the air. Valérie sits on a tombstone, and the breeze covers her with the white blossoms of some wild fruit-trees. Young, smiling, and gay, in this home of death, she looks, to the ravished eyes of her lover, "like a second spring, fairer, younger, than the first, and come down from heaven to this funereal place." Then wakens in his heart a voice full of passion and sorrow. Why must autumn ever come? Why must such lovely young beings ever die?

But human love was never meant to abide in such purely ideal regions, and Gustave's follows the common lot. The dangerous intimacy in which he lives with the unconscious Valérie and her noble, confiding husband—an intimacy which he endeavours to shun, and cannot—bears its fruits. In covert speech, which Valérie is too innocent to understand, he acknowledges that his heart is torn by an unhappy passion.

"'Yes, I love,' said I, hiding my face in my hands, that she might not read the truth there—'I love a young girl in Stockholm.'

"'Is it Ida?' she asked. I shook my head to say 'no.'

"'But if it is a young girl, cannot you marry her?'

"'She is married,' I answered, with downcast eyes, and sighing deeply.

"'That is wrong,' she said, quickly.

"'I know it,' was my reply.

"She seemed to repent having grieved me, and added:

"'And it is even more unfortunate than wrong. I have heard that passions inflict such terrible torments. I shall scold you no more when you are sullen—I shall pity you; but promise me to do your best to subdue your passion.'

"'I swear,' said I, emboldened by the motive that guided me, and, taking her hand, I added—'I swear it to Valérie, whom I honour like virtue—whom I love like the happiness that has fled from me!'

"I thought I saw in her a reconciling angel, and I left her."

Another time this dangerous conversation is renewed. The Count and Gustave have combined to fête Valérie's birthday. Her joy has been

complete, and her hand rests in that of the lover whom she thinks her calm friend. His eyes are fastened, with terror and grief, on the fatal wedding-ring which divides them for ever.

"What!" I thought, "I too could have aspired to her! I lived in the same land, in the same province; my rank, my fortune, my years, everything drew me towards her. What prevented me from divining that immense happiness? My heart rose, and tears, bitter as my thoughts, fell on her hand.

"'What ails you, Gustave? Tell me what grieves you?'

"She wanted to withdraw her hand, but her voice was so touching that I ventured to keep it. I wanted to say to her—I know not what. But I felt that ring my torment and my judge. My tongue was frozen. I released Valérie's hand, and I sighed deeply.

"'Why,' she said, 'why always be so sad? I am sure you are thinking of that woman. I feel that her image has haunted you to-day more than ever. This whole evening has taken you back to Sweden.'

"'Yes,' I replied, with a painful sigh.

"'Is she, then, so lovely that nothing can make you forget her?'

"'Ah! she has everything—everything that in-

spires strong passion: grace, shyness, modesty, with one of those souls impassioned for good, that love because they live, and only live for virtue. And yet, and by the most charming contrast, she has all that tells of dependence and weakness—all that claims support. Her delicate frame is a flower that bends to the lightest breeze, and her strong and courageous soul would brave death for virtue and for love.'

"Exhausted by the warmth with which I had spoken, I trembled as I uttered the last word, for I knew not myself how far my enthusiasm had led me. I dreaded lest she should have divined me, and resting my head against the window-pane, I anxiously waited for the first sound of her voice.

"'Does she know you love her?' asked Valérie, with an ingenuousness she could not have feigned.

"'Oh, no, no!' I cried, 'I hope she does not. She would never forgive me.'

"'Never tell her,' she said; 'it must be dreadful to inspire a passion that inflicts such misery. I could never be happy again if I had caused such a passion; but I do not apprehend it, and that consoles me for not being handsome.'"

Valérie speaks as she thinks, and, to Gustave's indignant surprise, this moderate estimate of her charms is shared by the Count.

"Explain to me, if you can, how it is possible to love Valérie, as one would love any other woman. I was walking yesterday with the Count, when we saw a lady standing by a shop of the Rialto.

"'She is very pretty,' said the Count. I looked at her, her figure and the colour of her hair reminded me of Valérie. I wished to say she was like the Countess, but I dreaded lest my voice should betray me. However, as there was a good deal of noise on the bridge, and as he was not minding me, I said it.

"'Not at all,' he answered, 'this lady is extremely pretty. Valérie has youth and expression, but no one will ever mind her.'

"His words pained me. Not that I required another to find her lovely, but it is hard to think that I love her with this violent passion, that she is for me all that is lovely and seducing, and yet to know that never, at any time, can I express to her what I feel! I did not dare to tell the Count how unjust I found him.

"'At least,' I said, 'one cannot deny the Countess many virtues and a noble soul.'

"'No doubt she is an excellent creature; she will be all that a woman should be in time, and when she has seen more of the world, she will even be very amiable.'

"What, Valérie! dost thou need something yet to be very amiable! . . . . Can I then alone understand and appreciate thee, and shall that gift have been granted but to make me wretched? These sad thoughts absorbed me. I walked silently by the Count, and I thought, will man never know how to prize the happiness bestowed by heaven? And is not this accomplished man, so well calculated to be happy by Valérie, is he not then to be more envied than another? Ah! why then must happiness be even as a delirium? Does not that passion through which love sees happiness degrade it? And do I not daily see the Count rendering Valérie the noblest homage, confide to her his future, tell her that she makes his life lovely, and want her as he wants pure air to breathe in! But though I reasoned thus with myself, I came back to the old conclusion, 'Ah, how much more truly I could love her!'"

Vain thought! It is not he who is loved, it is the cold, calm husband. Gustave knows it, has known it from the first, yet exquisitely told is the scene in which that bitter truth comes home to him with power keen and new. The Count is in Venice, Valérie and Gustave are in a villa on the Brenta. As evening comes on the Countess orders her gondola; she will go and meet her hus-

band. Marie, her maid, and Gustave, accompany her. It is a delicious spring evening, the moon has risen, the gondola glides softly on the waters. Reclining on cushions, Valérie sings carelessly, but with a voice that stirs passion from her farthest depths in Gustave's heart. It is an hour for love, and love is forbidden; and Valérie, unconscious of the torments she wakens, only thinks how to meet her will please and surprise her husband. The Count is well pleased to see her, indeed; but unpleasant despatches make him abstracted—he does not see the waves swell nor heed his timid wife's terror. She is seated by Gustave, and to him she whispers her fears; for a moment it seems to him as if her childish alarm and his own vehement passion had met and bound them in one feeling; but a wave lifts the barque, the wind rises, and Valérie throws herself on her husband's bosom. "Oh! how I felt my solitude, and all that divided us. The Count, full of public matters, only noticed Valérie an instant. He pacified her, called her a child, and assured her that no one had ever been lost on the Lagunes. And yet she was on his bosom, her heart beat near his, he could feel her breath, and he remained cold, cold as marble."

Absence, instead of weakening a love so fatal, only added to its fervour. The fever of his heart

extended to his whole frame, after a separation which duty and honour commanded to be final. The Count, who learned the truth too late, only reached Gustave's sick-bed to see him expire. His manly sorrow for the unhappy destiny of his adopted son, his narrative of those last sad hours, are told with much pathos.

"He said to Erich, 'Friend, look at the weather, and see if it will be fine.'

"Erich came back and said,

"'The mists are rising, the mountains are clearing; it will be fine.'

"'I should like to see another fine day upon earth,' said Gustave . . . . He begged of us to draw his bed to the window, so that he might see the west.

"'There lies Lombardy,' he said to me; 'there sets the sun. How many fine sunsets have I not seen with you, and with her!'

"He had his bed drawn nearer to the window. The doctor feared lest he should feel the morning air.

"'It will hurt me no more,' said Gustave, and he smiled sadly.

"He begged of us to give him some cushions, that he might be seated. From the window one could see the wide chain of the Apennines. Dawn was breaking in the east, and the sun, which was

already up in Tuscany, was advancing towards our mountains. Gustave pushed back the curtains, and gazed on the magnificent sight. I had read through all his feelings—dark presentiments, fearful images, froze me. I was seated on the edge of his bed; my head was buried in my hands. He raised his to heaven with an inspired look, and said:

"'Let us leave grief to him for whom life is all, and who is not initiated in the mysteries of death.'

"'Alas!' said I, 'the future terrifies me in spite of myself, Gustave.'

"'Oh! how I bless heaven,' said he, 'for the hope and peace which meet in my heart, and make it as serene as this day will be! Yes,' he pursued—and the most heavenly look lit his face as he gazed on the horizon—'yes; oh, my God!—dawn tells of day, and thus the secret presentiment tells of immortality.'

"He said no more. He asked for the magnificent hymn of Gellert on the Resurrection; Berthy played it. He breathed painfully. His eyes were closed; he opened them an instant when the hymn was over; he held out his hand to me, and fastened his eyes on the west! Two tame doves perched on the window-sill; he motioned me to notice them.

"'They do not know that death is so near them,' he said.

"The sun was quite up; I saw that Gustave's looks sought its rays. His breath became more and more oppressed; his head grew heavy; his hand sought me—he no longer saw me. He sighed, a slight convulsion passed over his features—he expired in my arms, one of his hands clasped in Erich's.

"I resume my interrupted narrative. I wanted both strength and courage to pursue it. The saddest of images is still before my eyes—such as it struck me when I returned to that room which the most sublime and tender soul had forsaken. . . . . I long gazed on him, but without emotion. Grief seemed to pause before a thought loftier than all sorrow—and even with that coffin before me I felt future life in its fulness, and my soul spoke to his:

"'Thirsting for supreme happiness, thou hast turned thy lips away from the cup of life which could not sate thee; but thou enjoyest now the pure felicity of such as lived like thee! . . . . . But, Gustave, Gustave!—canst thou feel, canst thou hear no more? The voice of grieving friendship cannot waken thee!' I pressed my lips on his frozen brow. 'Oh, my son! my son!' I

could say no more. Motionless, I bade a long farewell to this dearly loved one. When I attempted to close the coffin, my look fell on Gustave's hand, which hung out loosely. He wore a ring with his crest on it, according to the custom of our country. I wanted to take it off—then, remembering that he was the last of the illustrious house of the Linars, 'Remain,' I said; 'remain, and go down with him to the grave!' My tears flowed, and I placed the hand on the bosom of the dead."

This is well and tenderly told, yet Gustave and his death are the fault of the story. We can believe in his love; we cannot understand that this love should consume him—that is weakness indeed. "Werther" is far more powerfully conceived. In the fulness of youth, with a heart which an exquisite sense of the warmth and beauty of nature has made but too susceptible, he sees a beautiful girl, betrothed to another man, and he falls in love with her, and yields to that love as if there were neither time nor sorrow in store for him. She marries her betrothed; the once sweet cup is turned to bitterness—the world, too, is unkind and harsh—nature herself is faithless, and has closed her divine pages from the once impassioned gaze of her worshipper. Death alone is left, and death he seeks. Calmly, deliberately

—ay, even though he has acquired the knowledge that, spite her virtue, Charlotte loves him—by his own hand he dies; and we feel that his mind was diseased with something more fatal than love for Albert's handsome wife.

But with Gustave it is not so. His ardour for nature is more unquiet by far than Werther's; love comes not to him in a vague yet happy mood—and the powerful contrast of an epicurean serenity with the torments of unhappy love is not here. Morbid, excitable, impassioned—and even weaker than impassioned—Gustave at once loves Valérie, and, loving in vain, he dies. Die he must, to be like Werther, and not wishing him to commit suicide, the author surrendered him to grief.

But the experience of life is against this conclusion. There are, and will be, strong passions to the end of time, but the weak, whom alone they could kill, are rarely privileged to know them. Imitation was here fatal to Madame de Krüdener; the real story was infinitely more beautiful than that which, with "Werther" in her mind, she wove out of it. The enthusiastic young man, who adored her with a passion which the sight of her ardent tenderness for her husband only strengthened, loved her better and more truly than Gustave loved Valérie. Virtue, and

human weakness, compelled him to shun her sight, but her image remained in his heart as a lovely ideal, enshrined there until her errors taught him that all human divinities are idols made of clay. But sad, though, was that ending—the love was noble and pure, and how many a gentle thought or generous feeling may it not have inspired? How sweet a solace in sorrow, in hours of trial or endurance, may not her memory have been? Love so lofty is so rare that, when it is, it seems folly to set it by, and seek—what?—a shadow; for to die of love merely proves weakness. Werther knew it; he knew that death would never come, or he would not have shot himself!

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAME COTTIN—"AMÉLIE MANSFIELD."

A BEAUTIFUL and popular story has long been Madame Cottin's great claim on the reading public. "Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia," is still dear to the young of every land; whilst the impassioned and not always pure tales on which she may have rested her hopes of more enduring fame, are known, indeed, but comparatively not read out of France, and there but little.

We do not know much of this once celebrated writer's life, but what we do know reads a striking lesson on the mysterious difference which there is between an author and an author's works. Pure, religious, benevolent, and good, Madame Cottin deliberately wrote works which, though they recommended virtue in the abstract, preached nothing but passion and its transports in reality.

Of their mischievous tendency she was conscious, and held all novels bad and dangerous, but she had not the fortitude to abstain from writing them; and by the time conscience and judgment gained this hard victory over what seems to have been an irresistible temptation, disease and death closed her short life.

Sophie Ristaud was born in the small southern town of Tonneins, of a respectable Protestant family. She was carefully educated at Bordeaux, under the superintendence of her mother, an intellectual woman. As a girl, Mademoiselle Ristaud was pensive, shy, and retired. She was considered to have judgment—the quality she most failed in—but her literary talent was not suspected. At seventeen she married M. Cottin, a banker, with whom she went to reside in Paris; and at twenty, after a childless but happy union, she was a widow.

France was then in all the gloom of her terrible Revolution. Madame Cottin passed her widowhood in a retirement which the tragic events around her rendered doubly congenial. It was then she began to write. Nature had given her a facility which often rose to eloquence, and the fever of those sad times imparted itself to an imagination which, perhaps because it lay concealed under a calm exterior, Madame Cottin had

not been taught to control. She wrote "Claire d'Albe," one of her most objectionable works, in a fortnight. The subject—a young, lovely, but guilty wife—was a strange one to be chosen by the widow of a husband both fond and beloved. But we think it gives the key to a secret, unacknowledged pain, of which there are traces in the whole of Madame Cottin's short life. Desire with her ever went beyond what even a happy life can grant; and the resentment of a deceived heart made her seek in the errors of imaginary beings that something more than the common lot which, not finding it upon earth, she had not, however, learned to seek for in heaven. The virtue she had in her own life she did not grant her heroines. She gave them her tenderness, and a weakness which was not hers. Their imprudence ended with disgrace and death, but there was a seductive charm in every step that led to ruin; and it was to trace this might of passion—not to show its fatal ending—that she wrote. But although "Claire d'Albe" was by no means a good book, Madame Cottin, by one of those subtle inconsistencies in her character, made it the means of a good action. A friend of hers was suspected by the ruling government. Suspected was then a significant word: it meant a prison, with the imminent prospect of a scaffold. Ma-

dame Cottin's friend wanted fifty louis to leave France: it was to help to make up that sum that she took her little volume to a publisher. We are not told how much she got for it. It appeared anonymously, and its success was great. It was praised and censured in the presence of the unknown author, who was charmed to hear this matter discussed so openly. "Malvina" and "Amélie Mansfield" followed it. In "Amélie Mansfield" Madame Cottin indulged herself in another favourite inconsistency—the censure of women who write. But she was known by this, and her friends, though not without difficulty, induced her to suppress the objectionable passage in a subsequent edition. It certainly was one of the most singular contradictions on record, that whilst, without any necessity save that of her own pleasure, she wrote herself, and persisted in writing, she should condemn so severely women whose motives were not less cogent than her own, and whose works, as a general rule, were far more pure.

The produce of those works, however, was devoted to charity and good deeds. To give was a want of her nature with Madame Cottin. Gifted with youth and some beauty, she, however, dressed plainly—almost meanly—to have more left to bestow on the poor. She did more: to save

money she resided away from Paris, in a dreary little village a few leagues distant from it. Yet with all that true charity and self-denial subsisted another wish — a want we might say, and one both deep and strong—that of being loved.

She could not resist friendship or love; both, if possible, she should have. Thus she was led into an affection with one of the most distinguished men of her times, and whose name, though it has been concealed by the editor of some beautiful letters of hers, it would be easy to give here, were it necessary to do so. But though conjecture almost amounts to certainty, we need not care to know too closely who the man thus favoured was. Her love for him was not love, but adoration, and few human beings can resist a test so severe. Intellectual and religious though he appears to have been, would he ever fulfil for us Madame Cottin's enthusiastic ideal?

"You fill my heart, my imagination, the world, space itself," she wrote to him in 1804, in the full fervour of their young love; "I see nothing but through you, I love nothing but after you, I have not a feeling that does not refer to you, I do not hear a conversation but I summon you to it; in all things I answer you—I act as you would wish me to act. In a word, I live but in you, so that I sometimes imagine you are as much in Paris as

in the Pyrénées. Oh! my friend, how perilous would such love be if you were not its object!"

But the man so ardently loved could not, though free like her, become her husband. The marriage both had thought of, for a while, had to be relinquished. Madame Cottin foresaw a separation still remote, but which hung over the future like a dark cloud. "For a long time I have been turning my heart to God," she wrote to him, who had strengthened her enfeebled religious belief, "and God will perhaps fill it."

The doubt was justified by her own idolatry. Being present one day when grave and earnest men were deploring the looseness of the times, and one of them happening to say, "It is as if there were a vacant throne waiting for a ruler," Madame Cottin took hold of the words as prophetic, and wrote in her ardour: "'He is coming, he is coming, he whom you ask for,' I was tempted to exclaim, 'he comes to fulfil your desires, and sit on the vacant throne!'"

The lover does not appear to have found fault with this worship, but he was engaged on a great work—he had little leisure for letter-writing, and left the task to his mistress. For some time her own love bore her on, and let her feel no void.

"Every enthusiasm has come back to my heart. Is your love the cause? Do I owe to you

that fulness of life which oppresses me even unto pain? How explain those moments when my heart swells with a joy of which it knows not the cause, but that mingles something divine to all its enotions? I bless heaven that youth is leaving me, else I should be terrified at all the efforts I am told I should have to make in order to moderate the manifestation of my feelings in the world. I have always been accused of putting love in my friendship; no, it is not that, but an ardent heart spreads its ardour on all it touches. My friend," she pursues, alluding to some jealous feeling he had conceived, "what am I to do? You would be wrong to feel uneasy. Nothing is more impossible than that my tenderness for you should be weakened. I am yours, as the world is God's. I am your work, your property."

Madame Cottin was attractive; she had plenty of admirers, and she indulged herself in tender friendships, one of which displeased her lover. Pained by his suspicion, yet half pleading guilty, she wrote to a mutual friend, whom she called her adopted mother, and made the following frank confession, "I believe that with my last breath, at the moment of falling before the throne of the Supreme Judge, I shall still be keenly alive to the pleasure of being loved."

Yet not on this dangerous rock did they split.

Madame Cottin had been reared with a cousin whom she loved with more than sisterly affection, and whose children she had adopted. This lady saw with little favour her cousin's passion; the lover, on the other hand, was jealous of a friendship so ardent, and Madame Cottin had to choose between the friend of her youth and the lover of her heart. Love was sacrificed to a friendship without which she could not live.

"A friendship like this," she said herself, "contracted in infancy, is sometimes less seductive, but is always stronger than love."

Her lover's jealousy, increased by a sense of the coldness to which his own had contributed, made him desire that their correspondence should cease, and the motive he gave for this was a very cold one. He wanted his whole mind for the great work on which he was engaged, and her letters disturbed him. She obeyed, and her long farewell letter is a masterpiece of sweetness and love resigned and enduring. Submitting to the harsh sentence pronounced upon her, she says, gently, "Before I bid you farewell, let me tell you once more that I love you. . . . . This morning, on arriving here, I found your letter. My God! I exclaimed, you alone are then left to me! But to my friend I owe this last, sweet, and strong asylum; and even when he thinks himself com-

pelled to part from me, he does not leave me alone upon earth. Receive from her who was your Sophia, who has not ceased to be such, receive from her who loves you, and is going to tear herself from you, such blessings as none ever received before from a being of their own species, for no benefits can be compared to those I have received from you."

"Oh! my dearest, my truest friend!—if, in that long silence which will follow on a trust so tender, on hopes so sweet—if your thoughts seek me, and seek to penetrate my feelings, will you say: 'If she is calm, she owes her peace to me; if she smiles, it is that she thinks she will see me again in eternity.' . . . . Take care, my friend, that you are not wearying too soon. A friendship like ours is not so mean a good that it must not be purchased at some cost. Believe me, let us not thus give up our treasure. The time is coming when we can enjoy it; a few years more and we shall have acquired the right of being friends!"

Then breaking off, after alluding to her cousin, she thus ends this sad and tender farewell:—

"Let that pass; this must be my last letter. Let me once more weep over my loss with you, and press you on a heart all yours. And now adieu!—adieu, my friend, my benefactor, my brother! Be careful of your health. Spare me

the terrible grief of knowing you to be ill. Watch over yourself. I ask it in the name of that tender love which had chosen you, and chosen you alone, amongst all the men whom I have known. Adieu! even in separating we fulfil our destiny—we do not cease being united; and we shall meet in the bosom of our common Father, our mutual refuge in this separation."

Thus ended Madame Cottin's great love; and as we read her last letter, so tender in its farewell, we are tempted to ask: Is this, indeed, the inevitable destiny of love? Is there no other end than this to that terrible and divine feeling which can be the curse or the blessing of a human life?

Madame Cottin did not long survive this separation, which was final. After a severe illness, patiently borne, she expired, on the 25th of August, 1807, in the thirty-fifth year of her age. Her two last works, "Mathilde" and "Elizabeth," were her purest and her most popular productions—the last especially. She left two other works unfinished—one on the truth of Christianity proved by the feelings; the other was a novel on education, from which she expected "the only fame," she said, "that a woman could wish for." In that hope she was disappointed; for if that unfinished work still exists, it has never been published, and probably never will.

"Claire d'Albe," "Malvina," "Amélie Mansfield," "Mathilde," and "Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia," are Madame Cottin's five novels. Passion, eloquence, and tenderness are their great characteristics. "Amélie Mansfield" is the best in a literary point of view; "Elizabeth" is the purest. "Claire d'Albe," besides its faults of taste, is an indelicate picture of a guilty passion; "Malvina" is a copy of "Rash Vows," and is far less probable than that improbable story. The heroine of "Rash Vows" pledged herself to widowhood—not an uncommon resolve; "Malvina" vows not to marry, in order to adopt the child of her friend—an exaggerated test, to which friendship is rarely put. She breaks her own vow, and her husband's infidelity is her punishment. The tale has some graceful pictures, but not much merit. "Mathilde," an historical romance of the old school, is still popular with the ignorant and the young. Passion, the Arabian desert, a beautiful Christian princess, a chivalrous Arab Prince, the names of Saladin and Cœur de Lion, cover every deficiency. Some passages in this tale display great power and possess great beauty; but, as a whole, it is weak, and it belongs especially to an utterly conquered school—that of historical romances before the days of Sir Walter Scott.

So far as incidents and the painting of the feel-

ings are concerned, "Amélie Mansfield" is the *beau idéal* of an impassioned story. It has deficiencies, moral and literary; but, as a tale of ardent, ill-fated love, admirably constructed and eloquently told, it is unrivalled; and if these merits were paramount, instead of being, unfortunately, secondary, it would still be a matchless story. But Madame Cottin's faults are all of the fatal kind; she wrote from the fulness and tenderness of her heart; feeling hid human nature from her view. Love is her hero and heroine, her primary and subordinate characters—hence a monotony which we have not leisure to notice as we read, but which we remember when we close the book.

Passion, too, is exaggerated—it is all of the wild, fierce, tragic kind; and sentiment is unpleasantly sweet. The bad, dangerous, seductive passages are the best, and we are interested in what we most condemn. The style is sweet, flowing, and easy; but, save when it speaks the language of the heart, it never rises high. In short—and spite its faults and merits—this tale essentially fails in that something which, whether it be power in the characters or in the telling, every true novel must possess to live. "Amélie Mansfield" lasted thirty years, and is not forgotten yet; more, spite some charming qualities, it must not claim.

The story is admirably calculated to interest, and does not flag for a moment. The subject was so fortunate in its perplexities, and these were so artistically dealt with, that it could not fail to lead on a reader.

The Count of Woldemar, a haughty Saxon noble, was so deeply impressed with the importance of nobility in general, and of the Woldemars in particular, that he took more than usual care to secure his descendants from the perils of a *mésalliance*. By his will he appointed his grandson Ernest his heir and successor, on condition that he should marry his granddaughter, Amélie de Lunebourg, and disinherited whichever of the two should venture to disobey his behests. The two children, though brought up together, disagreed and quarrelled, and had to be separated. Ernest was sent travelling; and, whilst he was away, Amélie fell in love with and married her drawing-master, M. Mansfield. After a short and not happy union her husband dies, and, discarded by her haughty family, Madame Mansfield accepts the home which M. Grandson, her late husband's uncle, offers her and her child in Italian Switzerland, near Bellinzona.

On a tempestuous night a traveller, rescued by guides whom Amélie's prayers and tears sent forth to save him, is brought to M. Grandson's

hospitable mansion. This traveller, M. Semler, has sprained his ankle, and cannot be removed. He is handsome, brave, heroic, but eccentric. He cannot look at Amélie without emotion; and with a sincerity which is scarcely well-bred, he confesses that he detests children, and repels her Eugène with something more than coldness. Amélie is hurt, surprised, yet involuntarily drawn towards him. It is not love, of course—it is friendship; but who had ever imagined friendship to be so delightful? The traveller's letters to a bosom friend tell us his secret. His name is not Henri Semler—it is Ernest, Count of Woldemar. He came to take a mean and cruel revenge on the woman who had once dared to slight him, to make himself loved and forsake her; and she saves his life, and he is conquered, and adores what he once detested. He adores her, yet he never means to marry her; he will not succeed M. Mansfield in her heart; he will not become the father of M. Mansfield's child; above all, he will not, he dare not, so mortally offend his imperious mother as to unite himself to the hated Amélie. Honour, pride, filial duty, are arrayed against passion. There is eloquence, but there is also exaggeration, in the struggles which Ernest endures. He is weak and dishonourable to the last degree, and, untaught by sad experience,

Amélie is strangely imprudent. She becomes the mistress of a man who confesses he is not what he seems, who refuses her hand when it is offered by her uncle, and he leaves her guilty and disgraced, hiding himself behind a feigned name.

Placed between the woman whom he really loves and his imperious, haughty mother, Ernest is true to neither. He forsakes Amélie to save his mother's life, and when the betrayed woman follows and discovers him, and dies broken-hearted, he dies too. Weakness, shameful weakness, fills and crowns his life. Yet he is represented as a strong, heroic character, just as the feeble, indiscreet Amélie is represented as virtuous. The blame which attaches to both is put on the noble passion of love; and how is that passion represented? Impetuous, tyrannic, a torment, and a curse!

"Amélie Mansfield" and "Claire d'Albe" were Madame Cottin's literary sins—"Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia," was the atonement. In every land this lovely story has been read, in every land it has shed its gentle and holy charm. The filial love, the patient, weary journey, the triumph and the joy of the end, are world-known. They are blended with our recollections of childhood or of youth, and have given to Madame Cottin's name a spell which will not soon depart.

CHAPTER IX.

MADAME DE STAËL.

The eighteenth century, so remarkable for having nursed and brought forth the greatest revolution the world has beheld since the religious convulsions which followed on the close of the middle ages, is also pre-eminent as being the most intellectual century France has known. She had more genius in the preceding age, but she had not in an equal degree that keenness and activity of mind which ended in the wildest of social theories, and in the most terrible negation of social authority. Until the result came—a result which had its good as well as its evil aspect—that intellectual fervour was full of enchantment. Women, who, if they were not always remarkable themselves, had the art of gathering and keeping around them men of mind, science, and genius, held assemblies,

which passed under the significant though not always correct name of *Bureaux d'Esprit.* They were something more, assuredly. They were *bureaux* in which science, religion, abstract politics, literature, and history were debated with more passion and ability than fairness. They were dangerous, for they spared nothing; but they form one of the most curious chapters in the history of the human mind. They show us how, through nearly a hundred years, men born to act could make it the business of life to think, and especially to talk. Speech seemed their object, and, for a long time, speech alone seemed likely to be the end of these meetings.

The most remarkable Bureaux d'Esprit were those of Madame de Lambert, one of the earliest, and about which we know little—of Madame de Tencin, Madame Geoffrin, Madame du Deffand, Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, and Madame Necker.

Madame de Lambert was amiable, polite, virtuous, and well-bred. What Madame de Tencin was we have seen. Madame Geoffrin did not know how to spell, but charmed the fastidious Walpole with her admirable good sense. Madame du Deffand, his friend, was blind, witty, selfish, and ill-tempered. Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, unfortunate and impassioned. Madame Necker, the best, the most virtuous, save Madame de

Lambert, was esteemed, admired, and found dull.

Mademoiselle Curchod, daughter of a Protestant pastor of the Pays de Vaud, had received a classical education from her father. She was handsome, amiable, and won young Gibbon's heart. But they did not marry; another husband and another fate awaited the young girl. She came to Paris, was seen by Necker, and became his wife. Never was husband so fond, nor wife so devoted. Necker, a Genevese and a Protestant, became an eminent banker, then a minister, and, for a time, the idol of France. He was honest, well-meaning, and disinterested. He thought to save France, and France long thought she could be saved by him. His wife's salon had prepared his fame, and was used by her for that purpose. The men whom she drew around her felt they were but the stepping-stones of Necker's greatness. Yet they liked her, for she was good, but she never acquired the tact and finesse of a Frenchwoman, and especially of a Parisian. Her husband was respected for his sterling qualities, but he had a power of sarcasm which was rather feared. He used it seldom, and was generally as silent as a guest in his wife's drawing-room. Such were M. and Madame Necker, when, on the 22nd of April, 1766, was born their only child, Germaine.

Childhood is the key to after-life, and this truth, trite though it be, must not be forgotten when we speak of Madame de Staël. If we want to understand her faults, her virtues, and even the bent of her genius, we must examine attentively what her childhood was.

Madame Necker was learned, religious, and austere; her temper was thought cold; in reality, she was an impassioned and ardent woman, but she had early learned the severe task of self-subjection, and her manners were formal. The education she gave her daughter was a compromise between what she wished her to be, and what a precocious and unusual acquaintance with French society was likely to make her. Madame Necker was a Protestant, and her daughter, instead of being reared in a convent, remained with her, received a classical education like herself, and grew up surrounded by the heterodox philosophers and authors whom, with all her piety, Madame Necker drew around her. Only a large, generous nature like Germaine's could resist such unchild-like rearing. One who saw her in her youth, and who, being young herself, saw her without disguise, has left a curious and characteristic account of her at the age of eleven.

She was lively and merry, but precocious; her pleasures, like her studies, had nothing to do with

her years. Neither her face nor her person gave promise of beauty; her complexion was swarthy, her features were irregular, though mobile and full of expression, and her large dark eyes were what they ever remained—magnificent. Mademoiselle Huber was introduced to her as a friend and companion. Germaine received her with transport, promised to love her for ever, and she kept that childish promise, which after-years so often break; then questioned her concerning her studies, wished to know what foreign languages she was learning, and if she often went to the play. Mademoiselle Huber replied that she had only been three or four times to a theatre. Germaine promised to take her, and suggested that on their return they should write an account of whatever play they had seen, and note what had struck them in it. It was her habit she said. She also proposed that they should write to each other every morning.

Young though she was, Mademoiselle Huber was struck with the fervour and the eloquence of her new friend. She was also edified to see how that friend's conversation and intellectual gifts were already prized by the rulers of the French society. A wooden stool was placed by Madame Necker's arm-chair in the drawing-room—this was Germaine's seat. Scarcely had she taken it,

when several grave-looking men came up to her. One of them took her childish hands in his, and talked to her as gravely as if she had been five-and-twenty. This was the Abbé Raynal. The others, who likewise addressed her with every mark of interest, were Thomas, Marmontel, Grimm, and the Marquis de Pesay.

At dinner, Germaine was silent, but she listened with the face of one who understood every word that was uttered. Nothing appeared to escape her quick comprehension, not even politics, arid though they usually seem at that age. More guests came after dinner. No one approached Madame Necker without saying something to Germaine. The most remarkable men, especially, seemed to delight in her conversation. They liked to attack, provoke, and, if possible, perplex her. They questioned her concerning the books she had read, and recommended others to her notice.

If Madame de Staël was thus courted in her childhood, and if at eleven her conversation was already so attractive, need we wonder that she cared little for the pleasures of her years, and that only one amusement—and this was forbidden her—is recorded as having pleased her. This was to cut out paper kings and queens, and make them act tragedies by stealth, since she was not

allowed to do it openly. Hence she derived, it is said, the habit of twirling in her fingers a strip of paper, or a twig stripped of its leaves. Without this slender sceptre in her hand, her eloquence forsook her.

With such an education, no clever girl could fail being an author early—and Germaine was more than clever. She wrote portraits and panegyrics, and commented "Montesquieu's Esprit des Lois"—a brilliant but most ungirlish book. Her very first attempts were remarkable for that vigour of thought and style which ever distinguished all she wrote. The Abbé Raynal acknowledged her power, by wanting her to contribute a chapter, on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to his great work—a request she did not comply with. When Necker's "Compte Rendu" appeared, Mademoiselle Necker, then fifteen, sent him an anonymous letter, which its style at once betrayed to her father.

Yet this precocious taste for literature received no encouragement from M. Necker. He liked women to be accomplished and intellectual, but he did not like them to write. At his request, his wife gave up composition, and only indulged herself in fragmentary writing; M. Necker could not endure to think that his presence should ever be considered an interruption to his wife's literary

labours. His daughter, aware of his feelings, and loving and respecting him too deeply to disregard them, took the habit of writing anywhere, or anyhow, standing, and with no better desk than such as the corner of the marble mantelpiece afforded. Thus M. Necker never witnessed the effort; he saw the result, and, spite all his prejudices against female authorship, that result was too splendid not to conquer his opposition.

Madame Necker, however, was disappointed in her daughter's education. Close study proved so injurious to Mademoiselle Necker, that it had to be interrupted when she was fourteen. She was sent to her father's country-house at Saint Ouen, to recruit her failing health. In this pleasant retreat she enjoyed herself greatly with Mademoiselle Huber; the two girls assumed the attire of nymphs and muses, and acted, or rather improvised, plays, dramas, and tragedies in the open air. From the calm and severe world of learning, Germaine had escaped into the enchanted realms of imagination; and, to Madame Necker's mortification, the fugitive never fairly returned. All her daughter's brilliant gifts and genius could not console her mother for the deficiencies which this interrupted discipline had caused; and to a lady who expressed her admiration of Mademoiselle Necker's wit, eloquence, and intellectual power,

she coldly and sincerely replied: "All that is nothing—nothing at all—to what I wished to accomplish."

Madame de Genlis, writing of Madame de Staël, after her death, also came to a similar conclusion, which, indeed, was frequently heard from her in conversation: "Often, in thinking of her, I have regretted that she was not my daughter or my pupil. I would have given her good literary principles, just ideas, and simplicity; and with such an education, and her fine mind and generous soul, she would have been an accomplished woman, and the most justly celebrated authoress of our times."

Madame de Genlis would certainly have been a better literary instructor than Madame Necker. Spite that lady's classical education, her taste was not good. She could not write simply and clearly. Her thoughts and her style may be reckoned among the curiosities of literature. She was a true and good woman, but she was a bad and affected author. It is not easy to say how far, had they stood in the relation of teacher and pupil, Madame de Genlis and Mademoiselle Necker might have agreed. But Germaine was young, ardent, and impulsive—Madame de Genlis was clever, supple, and insinuating; she was passionately fond of teaching, and knew how to win the

very heart of youth. Madame Necker, on the contrary, was cold and austere; she was capable of passion only where her husband was concerned; and with all the dogmatic authority of the teacher and the parent, she had none of the gentleness and the charm which both require.

M. Necker once said of his wife, whom he always loved most tenderly, "that, had it been possible to forgive her anything, she would have been thought thoroughly amiable." This faultlessness Madame Necker did not owe to nature. It was the result of sincere piety, principle, and strong will; hence, perhaps, though no one could think her insincere, she was never much beloved—and hence, too, her tacit but life-long differences with her daughter.

Madame Necker checked and repressed in almost everything a nature that required to be ruled indeed, but not quite so closely. Germaine was gentle, but she had impassioned and even exaggerated feelings. She could not hear her parents praised without bursting into tears; the mere thought of seeing some distinguished person gave her palpitation of the heart; but the most singular proof of this dangerous precocity is that which Gibbon suggested. When he came to Paris during Germaine's childhood, he visited his old love, and was kindly received by both M.

and Madame Necker. The child saw how much her parents valued his conversation, and conceived the strange project of securing them this gratification by marrying him. She was ten, and gravely made the proposal to her mother.

Surely the child who could think, feel, and talk so unchildishly, ought to have been taught, rather than checked, how to cut out paper kings and queens, if needed. We have already said that she did it by stealth; she did more, she read "Clarissa Harlowe," a forbidden book, in spite of the prohibition. Madame Necker had a nervous complaint that compelled her to stand and walk rather than sit. She gave Germaine her lessons whilst she was pacing the room up and down. When her back was turned "Clarissa" was opened, when she came back the book vanished, and thus the goodly volumes were gone through. No wonder that when later in life she gaily confessed this, Madame de Staël added: "The elopement of Clarissa has been one of the great events of my youth."

With that youth, disobedient and imaginative, Madame Necker had little sympathy; and if Germaine had a larger and more generous nature than her mother, it is also true that she had not, and did not wish to have, her mother's virtues. She rejected control, thought freely on most subjects,

and trusted to her impulses, as if impulses, though amiable, could ever guide the wayward human heart. A sad and not commendable feeling on either side, jealousy, widened a breach which found no vent in words, but was none the less felt and seen by all who knew both.

Few husbands and fathers have been adored as Necker was. It is almost calamitous to a man's fame to inspire so vehement a feeling. Madame and Mademoiselle Necker idolized him, and both proclaimed their worship to a world that cares little for domestic adoration. Its heroes are sun-lit and magnificent; they stand raised on a pedestal, far above the calm, shady regions of private life. If we get glimpses of goodness, of tenderness, and suavity, so much the better; but they must be no more than glimpses, and moreover the fame that calls our look to that privacy must be unique and unquestioned. Such is not Necker's; he had his day of popularity and pride, but that day has left few traces in history. The nation that hailed him with rapture turned from him to the impassioned eloquence of Mirabeau, and from him to the teachings of the scaffold. Necker was a great man for a few hours, in the dawn of a day that filled Europe, as well as France, with horror, and that closed with the gigantic power, the despotism, and the fatal greatness of a Napo-

leon. Whatever his gifts, whatever his virtues, mediocrity has now set her seal on him, and posterity will scarcely revoke the decision. But thus did not judge his wife and daughter. He was not merely an admirable husband and father in their eyes, he was the one man to love and adore. Germaine's conversation was eloquent and delightful, and Madame Necker could not see how much her husband delighted in it without feeling that she had lost something in a heart which once was hers undivided; on the other hand, Mademoiselle Necker loved her father too passionately not to feel a sort of jealousy of his wife, even though that wife was her own mother. That Madame Necker was jealous of her daughter, Madame Necker de Saussure acknowledges, tenderly though she deals with her; and Madame de Staël, who wrote her father's private life, has frankly confessed her own feelings. Speaking of his solitary youth in Paris before his marriage, she makes these strange remarks:—

"Sometimes talking with me in his retirement, he went over that time of his life, of which the memory moved me deeply—a time when I imagined him so young, so amiable, so solitary; a time when our destinies might have been united for ever, if fate had made us cotemporaries!" And farther on, alluding to his marriage, to his

tenderness for his wife, and to that lady's virtues, she adds, "She wanted the unique being, she found him, she spent her life with him; God spared her the misery of surviving him: peace and honour to her ashes! She deserved happiness more than I did." Surely the law that prohibits passion, even in our best and purest feelings, never proved its wisdom more effectually than in a case like this. A pure and sincere love for an excellent husband and father nevertheless contributed to divide a noble-minded woman like Madame Necker, and a generous one like her daughter.

Thus, revering her mother, but adoring her father, grew up Germaine, an eloquent, impassioned, and brilliant girl, whom some beauty would have made queen of all hearts.

A man of many accomplishments, who broke the heart of Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, to him she addressed those strange, impassioned letters which were written in the very fever of love, and who died himself of wounded pride—M. de Guibert—is said to have been bewitched by Germaine Necker. Under the name of Zulmé he thus painted her in the fervour of her youth. Setting aside the inflated taste of the age—and it must be confessed it was especially that of Madame Necker and her circle—this portrait gives us a

singular and powerful impression of what Germaine Necker was in her youth :—

"Zulmé is only twenty, and she is the most celebrated priestess of Apollo. She is the favourite of the god . . . From amidst the sacred maidens one steps forth. My heart will ever remember it. Her large black eyes beamed with genius; her hair, the colour of ebony, fell on her shoulders in waving locks; her features were more characteristic than delicate; they told of something beyond the destiny of her sex. Thus might we paint the muse of poesy, or Clio, or Melpomene. 'Here she is! here she is!' all cried when she appeared, and breath seemed gone."

The priestess sings to the accompaniment of a gold and ivory lyre; then, laying it by, she talks "of nature, of the immortality of the soul, of the love of freedom, of the charm and perils of the passions."

"I hear her—I look at her with transport—I see in her features charms beyond beauty. How varied and expressive is the play of her countenance! What shades there are in the tones of her voice! How perfectly do thought and expression agree! She talks, and, even if her words did not reach me, her tones, her gestures, her looks, would have made me understand her. She ceases a moment, and her last words echo in my

heart, and I see in her eyes what she has not yet spoken. She is wholly silent, and the temple is filled with applause. Her head bends modestly, her drooping eyelids veil her eyes of fire, and the sun seems gone from us."

Highly-coloured though this portrait is, it only does Mademoiselle Necker justice. She had a swarthy, mulatto-like complexion, strongly-marked features, a full projecting mouth, and a masculine appearance. These disadvantages were more than balanced by fine eyes, and what Benjamin Constant called her magnificent look, a countenance full of passion, feeling, and tenderness, a voice full of music, and an eloquence so rare that it surpassed the literary fame she acquired later. "If I were queen," said Madame de Tessé, "I would order Madame de Staël to talk to me for ever." It is only by the effect it produced on others that we can now even remotely conceive what that magic gift was like. Madame Necker de Saussure, her relative and adopted sister, says there was something heavenly in her language, and that her conversation in the *tête-à-tête* was more than could be imagined. "Everything with her sprang from the heart," she says—"even thought;" and elsewhere she confesses that all her feelings—friendship even—had the vehemence and impetuosity of love.

There lay the charm; life was ardent and strong in her. She felt deeply. There was passion even in her intellect, a power to enjoy and suffer in her whole being beyond the usual lot. Gifts of mind and heart which we often see apart blended in her, and with them the rare and lovely power of clothing feeling and thought in language eloquent and true. The fascination she exercised was unrivalled: it was that of a genius and a woman. She dazzled first, then she captivated. The spontaneousness of her feelings, the frankness with which she expressed them, her vivacity, wit, eloquence, and power of argument formed a rare combination of all that can amaze as well as charm a listener.

In his analysis of her power—and he wrote when he had ceased to love—Benjamin Constant has been both penetrating and minute. The sweet smile, the expression of goodness, the simplicity of manner, the absence of all coldness, affectation, or awkward reserve, the frank and graceful flattery, and the inexhaustible variety of conversation which dazzled, drew, and conciliated whosoever approached her, are carefully noted by one who had felt all their seduction. "I know no one," he adds in conclusion, "who is more convinced of her own immense superiority over every one, and with whom that conviction is less felt."

That superiority, which consisted more in the union of rare gifts than in one particular power, was also more personal than literary. We may now judge her by what she did; her contemporaries saw chiefly what she was. But if at all times Madame de Staël's intellect was superior to her writings, eloquent and powerful though these were, in her youth the difference was very striking. Before she was twenty she wrote a comedy in verse, of little merit; and two tragedies, one of which, "Jane Gray," alone was published. It is cold, and gives little promise of future fervour. Some tales in prose, and far superior to her poetry, she also composed; but they were not published for many years, and she was more known as a remarkable girl than as an authoress when she became M. de Staël's wife.

The Baron of Staël-Holstein was a middle-aged man. He was a Swede, and he represented his sovereign at the French Court. He gratified M. Necker's ambition, for he was a noble; and Madame Necker's feelings, for he was a Protestant. He admired Mademoiselle Necker; she felt no aversion to him; and, happy to please her parents, she married him, on the understanding that he was to remain ambassador in France, which his sovereign promised, and that he would never insist on her leaving M. and Madame Necker. Thus,

at twenty, she became his wife. A cold destiny for one who never ceased to feel a woman's longing for what she considered woman's only perfect happiness—love in marriage.

That happiness she could scarcely have anticipated in such a union. Perhaps that consciousness of her personal deficiencies which once made her say she would give half her wit to possess the form and features of Madame de Simiane, a beautiful but foolish lady, made her relinquish all hope of being loved. Perhaps, too, the wish of being a Baroness and an ambassadress may have been an inducement with one whom all her judgment did not save from the small form of ambition. Whatever her motives were—filial obedience, worldly wisdom, or the wish to enter aristocratic society—her decision was a fatal one; for, by binding her to duties she had not always the heroism and self-denial to fulfil, this unhappy union marred the best and fairest portion of her life.

Mademoiselle Necker was known to the friends whom her mother gathered around her, and this was no inconsiderable portion of the French literary world; but Madame de Staël moved in a wider circle, where her appearance was marked by some terrible mistakes. Already, at the age of seventeen, she had startled the old Maréchale de Mouchy, one of the greatest ladies of the *ancien*

régime, by asking her what she thought of love. But though this was bad enough, her presentation to Marie Antoinette was infinitely worse. Her curtsey to the queen was all wrong; one of the trimmings of her dress got loose; and when she called on Madame de Polignac, she forgot her cap in the carriage. This was an ominous beginning in a country where ridicule has always been strong, and was then all-powerful. But Madame de Staël laughed at her mistakes, got over them, and soon became something more than a mere court lady.

Her literary and political career now began. She wrote and published her letters on the writings and the character of J. J. Rousseau. They were intended for private circulation, but soon made their way to the general public. The delicacy of analysis and power of reasoning displayed in this essay were very remarkable in an author who had scarcely passed her twentieth year. Power, indeed, is always Madame de Staël's attribute. She is often wrong, but she is never weak; and she rarely fails to be original. It has been said that her ideas were not all her own—that she gathered them in conversation, and put them down in print. In the first place, there is nothing to prove that such was the case; in the second, if Madame de Staël owed her ideas to her friends, Marmontel, Thomas, Grimm, Raynal, &c., these gentlemen

must have thought more and better in conversation than they thought in writing—a remark that has never been applied to them; for they were all laborious and painstaking authors. In no case can the merit of style be denied to Madame de Staël. Nature had given her that wonderful gift which is to thought what light is to nature. She did not cultivate it. She cannot be considered a careful and correct writer; she wrote rapidly, and wrote too much as she talked; but her very words seemed clothed with vigour and pregnant with images. A happy instinct taught her how to treat eloquently the most arid themes, and to give all the charm of original thought to a close and critical examination of the works of others.

The "Letters on Rousseau" appeared shortly before the outbreak of the French Revolution—an event destined to exercise paramount influence on the life, opinions, and literary career of Madame de Staël.

CHAPTER X.

MADAME DE STAËL.

A WOMAN like Madame de Staël, so ardent and so enthusiastic, the daughter of a minister, and an ambassador's wife, could scarcely fail to take an active part in this the most remarkable, and, alas! the most tragic event of modern times.

Necker's first ministry extended from 1776 to 1781, when court intrigues made him resign. His daughter was only fifteen; she was twenty-two, and Baronness de Staël, when he was recalled to power in 1788—and it was she who had the happy mission of giving him the first news of his appointment.

She was joyous and full of hope; France was in all the fervour of her liberal aspirations—a new era of glory, of honour, and liberty seemed opening before her people. Madame de Staël was too

proud of her father, she believed too sincerely in his genius, not to see in his advent the herald of a glorious time. Necker's popularity was great, but it did not deceive him. When he received the news at Saint Ouen, he sighed to leave that retreat, for he felt his time was past. Do what good he might, events would go faster than his will, and would be stronger than his power to restrain. "It is too late," he said; and as his daughter still rejoiced, he added, "A minister's daughter has only pleasures—she enjoys the reflection of her father's power, but that power itself is a terrible responsibility, now especially."

The States-General opened in Versailles on the 5th of May, 1789. On the eve of that eventful day, Madame de Staël, and Madame de Montmorin, wife of the minister for foreign affairs, were looking out from the same window when the twelve hundred deputies passed below on their way to the church to hear mass. The three states —the clergy, the nobles, the commons—went by. Madame de Staël, the daughter of the liberal minister, and herself ardent in what then seemed liberty, could not conceal her joy and her hopes as she looked at the representatives of France. But Madame de Montmorin, a quiet, commonplace woman, said to her in an emphatic tone which impressed Madame de Staël, "You are

wrong to rejoice. Great disasters to France and to us will come out of this."

Never, so far as concerned the speaker, was speech more prophetic. Madame de Montmorin, and one of her sons, died on the scaffold; her other son was drowned; her husband was massacred in the fatal days of September; her eldest daughter died in prison, and the younger, Madame de Beaumont, survived only to die of grief.

The ill-judged and never opportune resistance of Louis XVI. to the spirit of the times hastened events. Troops were gathered around Paris, and early in July Necker was dismissed and exiled; but the troops would not fire on the people, and on the 14th of July, three days after Necker's departure, the Parisians took the Bastille, that first and memorable step in what now became the Revolution. Even though he banished him from France, the King gave his minister a marked proof of esteem. He ordered him to leave the country at once, and with the greatest secrecy. Necker obeyed scrupulously. When the King's letter came, he and his wife were at dinner, surrounded by numerous guests. No change of countenance betrayed their secret. As soon as they were alone, they entered their carriage, as if to take a drive, and travelled post-haste to Brussels. Necker left a letter for his daughter,

in which he bade her go to the country, lest her presence in Paris should be taken advantage of by the malcontents. She obeyed: not without a sort of regret; deputations from all the quarters of Paris were pouring into her house, and there was a fever of excitement into the very air, which a young and ardent woman like Madame de Staël could hardly resist. Two days after Necker's departure, M. and Madame de Staël followed him. They found him and his wife in an inn at Brussels, still wearing the full dinner-dress, now covered with dust, in which they had left France; for they had obeyed the King's orders so strictly as not even to bring away a change of attire. On thus seeing her father, calm as in his prosperity, Madame de Staël knelt at his feet in a transport of admiration and love.

Necker and M. de Staël went on to Bâle; the two ladies followed them slowly, and were overtaken at Frankfort by the courier who recalled Necker to power. He had learned at Bâle the revolutionary triumph, from the lips of Madame de Polignac, compelled to fly before it; and when his wife and daughter added to these tidings the news of his recall, he did not conceal from them apprehensions, which his wife shared so far that she wished him to decline this perilous honour, but which his more hopeful daughter heard, and

could not think founded. Conscious that he must now sacrifice his popularity to serve a falling cause, Necker returned to Paris. Never did triumph more splendid await a popular minister. From Bâle to Paris he met with one long ovation. Women knelt on the road as he passed, men unyoked his horses, and drew his carriage. With him seemed to return that liberty whose reign was to be so tragic. On reaching Paris, Necker at once proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville, to ask for an amnesty of the conquered party; an impassioned and enthusiastic crowd heard him with transport. When he stood on the balcony and spoke—the hero of that crowd's worship—Madame de Staël, overpowered by her feelings, fainted with joy. "When I returned to consciousness," she wrote, many years later, "I felt I had reached the limits of all possible happiness."

But though she conceived no rapture beyond this, she little thought her happiness would be so brief. Mirabeau had risen, a splendid but turbulent genius—the very genius of wrath and storm, who cared not whither he led France, so her ruins might be the pedestal of power and fame.

Little more than a year later, on the 8th of September, 1790, Necker resigned. His popularity was gone for ever—it was so far gone that the people would not let him leave the kingdom.

On suspicion of having betrayed the popular cause, he was arrested at Arcis-sur-Aube; his life was even threatened, and an order of the Assemblée Constituante was required to set him at liberty. He retired to Coppet, in Switzerland, and there his daughter soon followed him. In the private life she has written of her father, she paints in a very touching light his resignation, and those beautiful domestic virtues which made him be adored in his own home.

Hitherto, Madame de Staël's political influence had been as a reflex of her father's power. Now, her eloquence, her opinions, her connexion with eminent political men, gave her a power of her own, which can be rather divined than related; for it was occult, and connected with circumstances of her life which she has voluntarily kept in the shade.

Madame de Staël was what was then called a constitutionalist. She had an ardent love of freedom, and thought the oligarchal constitution of England the most perfect form of government. She forgot two very important facts, which others after her have forgotten—that forms of government are good or evil according as they suit a nation; and that the English constitution rested on the power of a strong aristocracy, which was wanting in France. There it had long been

crushed by absolute power, and it could not be restored by any magic or sleight-of-hand. The power of a class must be an inheritance or a conquest. It can be taken—it cannot be bestowed. The aristocracy of France were chivalrous and brave, but they were too weak to take the rule which had so long been surrendered to the king; and the people felt themselves too strong to give up that power which, though new, they already found so sweet.

But our personal feelings often influence our opinions, even unconsciously. Disciple of Rousseau though she thought herself, Madame de Staël was as aristocratic as her plebeian birth would let her be. She loved freedom, but historic names had a *prestige* over her which she never denied. A form of government that recognised illustrious descent, and yet was ready to welcome genius, worth, and wealth; that gave freedom to all, but vigorously kept power within the hands of a few; that secured intellectual, religious, and individual liberty—seemed to her the *beau-idéal* of human wisdom. No doubt it might seem so in France, rising from beneath the intolerable weight of absolute power. Few saw, or would see, that oppression can take many forms, and be social as well as political; that it is possible to be free-born, and to suffer like the slave. But, apart from

such considerations, which the instinct of the nation felt without knowing why or how, one thing is certain, that the English Constitution has not been found applicable in France—and that, to her dying day, Madame de Staël thought differently.

The constitution elaborated by the Constituante was short-lived; but it lasted long enough to waken ambitious hopes in one of Madame de Staël's friends, the young Count of Narbonne. He was handsome, brave, and witty. The name he bore was ancient and honoured; but his origin, though unacknowledged, was known to be illustrious, if rank can efface sin. His father was attached to the person of the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Louis XV., and followed her to Parma on her marriage. M. de Narbonne is said to have been their son. Another of the princesses is thought to have been his mother, and his striking likeness to the old French king strengthened either rumour. Madame de Narbonne helped to conceal the shame of her rival, and brought up the child as her own. He was handsome, amiable, and accomplished, as a man, and universally beloved.

Was it merely friendship, or—as her enemies said—was it love, which bound Madame de Staël to this descendant of the French kings, now wed-

ded to the cause of the people? It is hard to say. A great name, the charm of genius, and, above all, of a most generous heart, have made the world indulgent for Madame de Staël. Few have been found to dare to repeat what was said of her when she lived, and what none have proved. But whatever were her feelings for M. de Narbonne, the openness with which she manifested them injured her reputation at a time when the absence of her husband and of her parents made slander easy.

Europe was threatening France, and the moderates ardently wished for a war, which they conceived would weaken the democratic party, and strengthen the executive power. To that party Madame de Staël belonged, and her influence helped M. de Narbonne to become Minister of War at the close of 1791. His power lasted a few months only, and served but to show him more clearly the inevitable catastrophe towards which all things were tending. It was then that M. de Narbonne and his friends, though little in the favour of the Court — Madame de Staël's house was called "le camp de la revolution" — conceived the romantic project of carrying off the king, whose safety was already doubtful. The king refused. Perhaps the plan was impracticable; perhaps he remembered the fatal flight to

Varennes, and its humiliating return. He stayed to meet his fate with that resigned courage that seemed to mark him out for a victim.

Thus ended Madame de Staël's power in this phase of the French Revolution. Henceforth her eloquence and courage were needed and used to save the lives of dear friends. The 10th of August, 1792, dethroned Louis XVI., and founded that Republic of which Vergniaud said that it was like Saturn, for it devoured its own children. Men who were liberals the day before now became proscribed aristocrats. M. de Narbonne and another found an asylum in Madame de Staël's house; but she could not hide them so well that a search would not betray their presence, and to be seen was to die. A search was ordered and attempted. Madame de Staël opposed it with a mixture of good-humour, flattery, and argument which the *commissaire* could not well resist. Her hôtel, being an ambassador's, could not, she warned him, be searched without violating the rights of nations, and thus bringing down on France the wrath of Sweden; and as Sweden, she added, was on the frontiers of France, the consequences might be dreadful. This new geography frightened the *commissaire*. He retired respectfully, and a generous Dutchman, Dortor Bollman, who later risked his safety to deliver La Fayette, of-

fered Madame de Staël to give M. de Narbonne the passport of a friend, and take him to England. The offer was gladly accepted, and a few days later M. de Narbonne was safe in London.

Madame de Staël had a passport for herself and her servants, but could not bear to leave whilst so many of her friends were exposed to perish. On the 31st of August she learned that M. de Jaucourt and M. de Lally-Tollendal, a descendant of an old Irish family, but by birth a Frenchman, and one of the most eloquent men of the day, had been arrested, and sent to the Abbaye. Every one knew, or seemed to know, the fate that was to befall prisoners. Condorcet and the English ambassador, Lord Sutherland, saved Lally; Madame de Staël was Jaucourt's friend. The members of the Commune de Paris were masters of the city. Madame de Staël knew none of them, but Manuel had a literary turn, of which she took advantage. She wrote to request an audience; he answered by giving her a meeting at seven the next morning. Democratic though she found the hour, she was punctual. She pleaded hard for the order that was to set Lally and M. de Jaucourt free, and Manuel could not resist her eloquent entreaties. Lally was already out of prison, but at her request he procured M. de Jaucourt's freedom. This was on the 1st of Sep-

tember. Twenty-four hours later the massacres began.

On that terrible day, the 2nd of September, Madame de Staël was to leave Paris. Outside the city she was to find another fugitive, the Abbé de Montesquieu, who was to travel with her, disguised as her servant.

Madame de Staël's generous anxiety to keep an appointment so important to the Abbé, for want of punctuality might ruin him, nearly proved fatal to herself. Scarcely had her carriage left the Hôtel de Suède, when a herd of furious old women assailed it with menaces and cries; ferocious-looking men came to their aid; Madame de Staël had barely time to whisper a message for the Abbé Montesquieu to one of her servants, when she was taken to the section of the quarter, there accused of favouring the escape of the proscribed royalists, and ordered to go to the Hôtel de Ville. So dense was already the crowd—and what a crowd!—that Madame de Staël's carriage took three hours to proceed from the Faubourg Saint Germain to the Hôtel de Ville. Cruel faces, looks that seemed to thirst for blood, and sinister threats of death and vengeance, escorted her the whole way. The very gendarmes answered her entreaties for protection with menacing or scornful gestures. One alone, moved by her

youth and her position—she was far advanced in pregnancy—promised to protect her at the peril of his life.

The Hôtel de Ville was reached, and Madame de Staël, leaving her carriage, ascended the steps, on which, not a month before, several men had been massacred. She passed through a wall of pikes and lances threateningly bent over her head. As she was going up the steps a man directed his lance towards her. The faithful gendarme's sword warded the blow. Madame de Staël says, and with truth, that if she had fallen then she must have perished. There is little doubt that men and women who did not even know her name, but who saw in her one of the hated class, would have torn her to pieces. And little more than three years before, and in this very place, the daughter of Necker had fainted with joy to hear the rapturous enthusiasm of the crowd welcoming her father's return to power.

She breathed freely on entering the Hôtel de Ville, where she found Robespierre and several others. The arrival of Manuel procured her a room, in which she was locked up with her maid, and where they waited six hours—"dying of hunger, thirst, and fear," she frankly declares. Their window looked on the Place de Grève, and

they could see the murderers coming back from the prisons with arms bare and blood-stained, and they could hear the furious cries of these savage men who summed up in a few days the wrath and revenge of ages.

Thanks to Manuel, Madame de Staël was released. "Ah!" he cried, much moved, "how happy I am to have set your two friends free!" Alas! six months later, Manuel himself perished on a scaffold, for having humanely refused to vote the King's death. To prevent Madame de Staël from assisting anyone to escape, she was not allowed to travel with any servant but her maid, and a gendarme escorted her to the Swiss frontier of France.

During the terrible reign of terror Madame de Staël wrote little; an eloquent but unavailing pamphlet, in favour of the unfortunate Queen, appeared without her name, but was generally known to be hers. Her father had already, in October, 1792, requested to be counsel for Louis XVI., a perilous office, which was committed to M. de Malesherbes, and which he expiated on the scaffold. By this offer M. Necker forfeited two-thirds of his property invested in France.

Madame de Staël was in England when the great tragedy took place. We find her at the head of the little French emigrant colony of

Juniper Hall, Surrey, so agreeably described by Miss Burney and her friends. Delicate ladies, who had crossed the channel in an open boat, and been fourteen hours at sea; Counts, who were glad to borrow their tailor's coat, and who with characteristic openness acknowledged it, and laughed at their own misfortunes. Ex-Dukes, ex-Bishops, ex-Ministers, Montmorencys, Talleyrands, Lally-Tollendals, the flower of the old aristocracy in birth, wealth, and merit, now gathered in that English refuge, short of supplies and very short of hope, but easy, dignified, and free, and, above all, good-humoured. Even the damp kitchen and parlour cottage to which some were reduced had not the power to repress the buoyancy of the national temperament.

The queen, and the generous queen, of this little world was Madame de Staël. Two of the men whose lives she had risked her own life to save were with her, and gladdened her heart with their presence. Her friends, M. de Narbonne, Talleyrand, Madame de Beaumont—the only survivor of the minister Montmorin's family—and *their* friends, shared her home. A M. d'Arblay—whose wife Miss Burney was destined to become—who had been adjutant to La Fayette, and shared his prison, was there as Narbonne's friend, and transcribed Madame de Staël's last and very

illegibly-written work on the Passions; Lally-Tollendal read aloud his tragedy of "Strafford;" and Talleyrand listened and smiled, put in a word and a criticism now and then; told Madame de Staël, who read some fragments of her work, that she did not know how to read prose; was pronounced a man of "admirable conversation, quick, terse, *fin*, and yet deep to the extreme of these four words," by the penetrating Miss Burney, and yet disliked, spite his infinite wit, till, without effort, by the charm of that softness so peculiarly his, he won over not merely that discerning judge, but every one around him. She was amazed at finding her first impression so quickly removed, and could not help writing to her father: "It is inconceivable what a convert M. de Talleyrand has made of me. Susannah is as completely a proselyte."

But deeper, stronger, and more genuine was the impression produced by Madame de Staël. "She is one of the first women I have ever met with for abilities and extraordinary intellect," wrote Miss Burney, to the Doctor, in Chelsea. Little notes—in which Madame de Staël called Miss Burney the first woman in England—were followed by an invitation to spend some time at Juniper Hall, which, though accepted, Doctor Burney did not allow his daughter to comply

with. Unpleasant rumours concerning Madame de Staël's political principles, and her connexion with M. de Narbonne, were already rife in England. Miss Burney was annoyed with the report, though she disbelieved it. "She loves him tenderly," she wrote back to her father, "but so openly, so simply, so unaffectedly, and with such utter freedom from all coquetry, that, if they were two men or two women, the affection could not, I think, be more obviously undesigning. She is very plain; he is very handsome. Her intellectual endowments must be, with him, her sole attraction."

A coolness followed, however, the intercourse slackened, and Madame de Staël was not unconscious that she had been slighted. Somewhat sharply, she asked Mrs. Phillips if women were always under control in England. She probably thought Miss Burney—her elder by some years—capable of visiting at Juniper Hall without reference to paternal authority. In a letter which she addressed to the author of "Cecilia," on her estrangement, she justified herself calmly enough, and quietly referred her feelings for M. de Narbonne to friendship. But the intercourse was broken, not to be renewed with anything like the old cordiality. Miss Burney's reluctance to believe evil of Madame de Staël gradually yielded to

public opinion. Mrs. Phillips, her sister, and Madame de Staël's neighbour, seems to have cared less for the world's decrees on this matter. Her partiality is often and clearly expressed; not without some occasional censure, but with evident sincerity. "Madame de Staël is, with all her wildness and blemishes, a delightful companion; and M. de N. rises upon me in esteem and affection every time I see him. Their minds, in some points, ought to be exchanged; for he is as delicate as a really feminine woman, and evidently suffers when he sees her setting *les bienséances* aside, as it often enough befalls her to do. . . . . I must go back to Monday, to tell you something that passed which struck and affected me very much. M. de Talleyrand arrived at Juniper to dinner, and Madame de Staël, in a state of the most vehement impatience for news, would scarce give him time to breathe between her questions; and when she had heard all he could tell her, she was equally impetuous to hear all his conjectures. She was evidently elated with hopes of such success as would give peace, security, and happiness to them all, yet scarce dared give way to all her flattering expectations. M. de Talleyrand's hopes were alive, likewise, though he did not, like her, lose his composure and comic placidness of manner."

But all the hopes and conjectures of the little colony were soon at an end. Madame de Staël was summoned to Holland by her husband, and, with many tears, she obeyed the call. M. de Narbonne remained behind, with M. d'Arblay, who married Miss Burney, and did nothing to renew her intimacy with his former friend.

From Holland, Madame de Staël probably proceeded to Switzerland, where her mother died in 1794.

To the last Madame Necker was the most tenderly loved of wives; and when we read how Necker stood still for hours because she had chanced to fall asleep with her head on his shoulder —she was a victim to sleeplessness—and yet how, after her death, he was tormented with scruples as to whether he had or not loved her enough—we can understand the passionate love a daughter like Madame de Staël felt for a man whose heart was so tender, and whose mind was so delicate.

Her own generous heart found sufficient opportunities for doing good in the vicinity of Switzerland to France. Refugees crossed the frontier, found an asylum at Coppet, and were there sheltered under Swedish names, that the magistrates of the Confederation might not be compelled to give them up. "We thought ourselves justified in deceiving tyranny," she frankly says. Once

the passport used by one of those fugitives was Swiss. Its authenticity was suspected. Young M. de Chayla was arrested on the frontier, and his uncle, that M. de Jaucourt whose life Madame de Staël had saved a year before, and who was now at her house under a Swedish name, was in the greatest grief. Unless M. Reverdil, Lieutenant Baillival, claimed M. de Chayla as a native of Vaud, the young man must be shot within twenty-four hours. M. Reverdil at first refused to commit what he called, and what was, an act of forgery. He also objected that, should the truth be discovered, Switzerland would no longer be able to protect her own subjects. But Madame de Staël's moral code was in her heart. She spent two hours in pleading the cause of humanity against that still more sacred of conscience; and at length M. Reverdil yielded, and M. de Chayla was saved. All Madame de Stael's faults and virtues are exemplified in this passage of her life. Her warm heart would know no obstacle to its wishes, and her pliable principles made her believe right what generosity made her desire. Twenty-three years after this event she still thought the course she had pursued the right one.

Madame de Staël's account of this incident is the only one we have; but if we wish to know

how truly generous she could be, we need only refer to a letter of Benjamin Constant's, written in 1794, and addressed to Madame de Charrière. Speaking of the lively interest Madame de Staël took in those whom she had once known, he adds:—

"She has just succeeded, after three useless and expensive attempts, in saving from prison, and in assisting to leave France, a woman, her enemy whilst she was in Paris, and who had made it her task to prove her hatred in every manner. This is more than talking."

It is indeed, and it is not merely the opinion of an admirer, who was soon to become a lover—it is that of Joseph de Maistre, the dogmatic Christian, the unflinching enemy of the eighteenth century, and of the French Revolution.

They met about this time at Lausanne, and had some desperate encounters — though, with great good-humour on either side, they never quarrelled.

"I know no head so thoroughly perverted as is hers," he wrote to a friend; "it is the infallible result of modern philosophy on any woman. But her heart is not at all spoiled; she is wrongly judged in this. As to wit, she has a prodigious deal of it, especially when she does not try to have any. As we have not studied together, we

have scenes that are fit to make one die of laughter—but we never quarrel."

In 1795 Madame de Staël returned to France with her husband, who was once more ambassador. Her remarkable work, "De l'Influence des Passions sur le Bonheur," commanded attention, and excited criticism. It had been written whilst she was still fresh from those sad and bitter feelings which the Reign of Terror was calculated to awaken in one whose friends were its victims, and who loved freedom. The summer calmness of Lake Leman, the June splendour of earth and sky, the sublime and lofty peace of that divine nature, contrasting as they did with the despair of man, "that prince of the earth," as she calls him, and for whom earth had no garb of mourning, filled her with discouragement and grief. The love of honourable fame had not saved her father from reverses, patiently borne, but bitterly felt. Love, friendship even, had, she found, their sting. When youth is sceptical it stops at no limits; and, in one sweeping sentence, Madame de Staël condemned passions, and even pure but passionate feelings, as fatal to man's happiness. She saw no remedy in religion—for faith, she declares, is as independent of the will as genius, or any natural gift—and to study goodness and philosophy she limits the consolation of impassioned

hearts. The cold and the wise she did not write for; yet we think that the cold and the wise alone could apply lessons so stern. Impassioned hearts know but one cure—change of feeling.

The religious part of the work, an admiration for suicide—which led Madame de Staël so far as to call it a sublime act—and the bitterness of her conclusions, were such as to waken severe criticism; but the admirable analysis of the passions, the delicacy with which she traced their workings, the acute and charming thoughts which seemed to escape from her, so spontaneous did they appear, could not but extend Madame de Staël's fame. She enjoyed her celebrity as she enjoyed everything; society was as dear to her as if she had not ardent friendships; yet few women had more, and did more to keep those she had.

It was some time before this, in the noon of life and fame, that she renewed that acquaintance with Benjamin Constant, which exercised in many respects so sad an influence on her life.

In a letter to Madame de Charrière, dated Lausanne, October, 1794, Benjamin Constant thus describes the powerful impression Madame de Staël's eloquent goodness had produced upon him:—

"I cannot be as yielding to you about Madame

de Staël as concerning M. de la Roche. I cannot find it difficult, as you say, to throw her some praise. On the contrary, since I know her better, I find it very hard not to be always praising her, and not to display the interest and admiration I feel to all with whom I speak. I have rarely seen such a union of astonishing and seductive qualities, so much that is dazzling and solid, a goodness so expansive and so cultivated; so much generosity, a politeness so amiable and so sustained in society; so much charm, simplicity, and abandon in private. She is the second woman I have found, who could be instead of the whole world to me; you know who the first was. Madame de Staël is infinitely more witty in private than in society. She knows how to listen, which neither you nor I thought; she feels the wit of others with as much pleasure as her own, she is ingenious and attentive in setting off those she loves, which shows both goodness and tact. In short, she is a being apart, a superior creature, who may be found once in a century, and such that they who approach her, know her, and are her friends, must not ask for other happiness."

The dawn of love is in this praise, which, though she only claimed friendship, Madame de Charrière resented as treason to herself. A jealousy, which not all Madame de Staël's delicate

flattery and politeness could eradicate, showed how much she feared this rival. When the love between Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël began, and how long it lasted, is more than anyone can tell, for friendship preceded its birth and outlived its close. It was always stronger on his side than on hers; and when she became a widow, and he wished to marry her, she refused. He threatened to commit suicide, as he afterwards threatened when her friend the beautiful Madame Récamier, unwillingly ruled his feverish and wayward heart; but her objections, probably founded on too close a knowledge of his unhappy, irritable, and vacillating temper, were not removed, and Benjamin Constant lived and forgot her. But the charm under which he was when he wrote to Madame de Charrière was never thoroughly broken, and influenced in no small degree his political and literary career.

Madame de Staël was rich, and her husband was prodigal. She had two sons and a daughter, and thought herself bound to leave him, and separate her fortune and theirs from his. Since her mother's death she spent her summers at Coppet with her father; she returned to Paris in winter; even for his sake she could not relinquish society, and even for her sake he would not leave the grave of her mother, buried, according to her

wish, in the grounds that surrounded their dwelling. An intimate friend of both father and daughter, who spent a good deal of time with them in Coppet, has left us a graphic account of their mode of life. The family took breakfast in Madame de Staël's room; coffee alone appeared on the table, but the meal lasted two hours; for avoiding politics, though she loved them so dearly, she was in the habit of saying that with them one had religious morals and poetry all in one.

Madame de Staël started some literary or philosophic topic, in which, says M. de Châteauvieux, she displayed all "that the human mind can conceive or create of imagination and depth." None could rival her in these controversies, not even her father, though he was no mean antagonist; yet when the victory was all but her own, she voluntarily committed some mistake that yielded it up to him. To him alone did she ever make such a concession.

After this literary breakfast, the guests separated, and did not meet again till dinner, "which was spent in a permanent quarrel between M. Necker and his old, deaf, and grumbling menservants, relics of that *régime* which M. Necker had buried, and who had followed his fortunes to Coppet in their embroidered coats."

At seven, M. Necker had his whist, which was

another long quarrel between himself and his daughter. They left it off vowing never to play again, and forgot all about it the next day. The rest of the evening was devoted to conversation.

Madame de Staël's part in the politics of her day was too influential on her own destiny to be omitted in any account of her, and too complex and occult to be easily explained without devoting more space to it than a literary notice is entitled to. She has thrown little light on the subject herself, and only occasionally makes admissions which, though slight and unsatisfactory, imply not merely power, but the habit of power. Her political career, such as it was, had three phases: she was powerful during the ministry of M. de Narbonne, who was said to be her lover, and in whose elevation she had assisted, under Louis XVI. Under the Directory she also had considerable influence; one of the members, Barras, though a regicide, was her friend. She acknowledges that she did her best to prevent the crisis of the 18th of Fructidor (4th Sept., 1797) by helping Talleyrand—who already owed her his recall from exile—to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The other members Madame de Staël considers her enemies, and she taxes them with having given orders to have her arrested on the Swiss frontier, and imprisoned in Paris, on

account of her persevering efforts in favour of *émigrés*; Barras, however, defended her, saved her from that persecution, and obtained for her permission to return to Paris unmolested.

That she should have been persecuted in times comparatively calm, shows that she possessed, not the shadow of power, but a reality to be dreaded even by a government. Already Legendre, the butcher, and one of the Parisian Deputies, had denounced her and her *salon doré* in the Convention.

The 18th of Fructidor was followed by persecutions which moved Madame de Staël's pity. She was accused of carrying that dangerous virtue too far, and she left Paris for a time; for, as she says herself, "Pity is called treason in times of political crises."

Yet that generous zeal, which never forsook her, again made her save a man's life on her return to Paris. M. Norvins de Montbreton asked her to interfere on behalf of his brother: a military commission was sitting to judge the prisoner, and the sentence was expected to be death. Bernadotte had been refused the life of his friend, Colonel d'Ambert: Madame de Staël did not know to whom to apply, till she remembered that General Lemoine, who then commanded the Paris division, liked her conversation.

She called on him, accompanied by M. de Norvins. It was very early, for time was precious. General Lemoine was profuse in tedious apologies concerning his apartment and his toilette, but refused to interfere in the matter. All Madame de Staël asked of him was to sign an order for suspending the trial; but the fear of committing himself made him refuse. She renewed her entreaties, fearing alike to say too little or too much. She looked alternately at the clock and at the General, to see which of the two—time or the man—sped more quickly to the goal she dreaded, or to that she wished for. Twice the General took up the pen to sign, and twice he put it down. If we want to know the arguments Madame de Staël used, we can turn to a page of "Delphine." The General's child was ill. "If you do not save this man's life," she cried, "your child will die!" The heart is superstitious—the prophecy of woe moved the father. The eloquence which few could resist prevailed once more—the order was signed.

It was towards this time that the third phase of Madame de Staël's political destiny, and the most fatal to her—her long enmity to Napoleon—began.

In 1797, during one of her visits to Paris, Madame de Staël first saw the man who was to

exercise such power over her life, and who already filled Europe with his name. His appearance, his manners—though he meant these to be gracious, and spoke kindly of her father—turned her admiration into something that was not fear or awe, but that partook of both. Marvellous intellectual power, deep irony, and a cold will that cut like steel through obstacles, were the characteristics with which she was struck They spoke on politics, and did not agree. Then General Bonaparte changed the discourse—spoke of the country, the fine arts, and of his love for retirement. Reserved though her account of this first interview is, it is easy to perceive that it made them enemies.

The *coup d'état* of the 18th of Brumaire showed how sincerely the young general loved retirement. Madame de Staël, who had been travelling, returned to Paris on the very day this event took place. He heard that she had censured his conduct, and he sent her his brother Joseph, who was her friend, with overtures of peace. The meaning of the message was: What did Madame de Staël want?—the two millions her father had left in deposit? If so, the Consul declared himself ready to see that she received the money. "The question is not what I want," replied Madame de Staël, "but what I think;" and she went on opposing the new government in that

salon of hers which was but a permanent social parliament, singularly obnoxious to a man who hated, above all things, the parliamentary form of government.

Benjamin Constant was to make a speech in the Tribunal, and that speech, directed against tyranny, was inspired by Madame de Staël. On the eve of that day her *salon* was full, and Lucien Bonaparte was one of her guests. Benjamin Constant went up to her, and whispered, "Your *salon* is full of people that please you—it will be empty to-morrow, if I speak—reflect!"

She told him to follow the dictates of his conscience. The speech was delivered, and the ten guests whom Madame de Staël was to have at her house on the evening of that day sent in ten letters of excuse. Few things affected Madame de Staël more than to be thus deserted and reminded of a power beyond that intellectual rule she loved so dearly. It was only by publishing her work on literature, in 1800, that she regained lost ground. It was successful; and, as the world loves success of every kind, her *salon* was thronged once more. "Delphine" appeared two years later. It was treated with great severity; in many respects it deserved it. Madame de Staël thought that much of the animosity displayed was owing to the hatred the First Consul bore her. He had

already hinted, whilst she was away, as usual, to spend the summer with her father, that she had better not return to Paris. Though she disobeyed, with apparent impunity, this implied command, she felt insecure. Once more she left Paris, and once more she returned to it, when, in 1803, braving opinion that had perhaps restrained him till then, the First Consul exiled Madame de Staël. One afternoon as she was sitting, with a few friends, in the parlour of a country house, where she had hoped to remain forgotten, a man in grey rode up to the gate. At once she knew her fate. Politely enough the stranger, who was commandant of the Versailles gendarmerie, informed her that she was to leave Paris, and retire to a distance of forty leagues, within twenty-four hours. She replied that only conscripts could prepare for a journey within twenty-four hours, and not women and children; but she agreed to accompany him to Paris, and to depart thence. This gendarme had a literary turn, and spoke politely of her works.

"You see, sir, what it leads a woman to, to be a *femme d'esprit*," she replied. "Pray, if such counsel be necessary, advise the ladies of your family against it."

Madame Récamier, who had received her friend at Saint Brice, and who was present when all this

occurred, says, in one of the fragments published in her memoirs: "I witnessed her despair; she wrote to Bonaparte, 'What a cruel distinction you confer on me. I shall have a line in your story.'"

Though Joseph Bonaparte interfered in her favour, he could not get the order for this arbitrary exile revoked. It was scarcely safe to plead for Madame de Staël; still less so, to show her too devoted a friendship. Madame Récamier's affection for her was one of the causes which brought down on that beautiful woman the displeasure of the Imperial master. In the fulness of his power Napoleon went so far as to say, "That he should consider as his personal enemy any foreigner who would frequent Madame Récamier's *salon*." Was this mere want of magnanimity, or must we see in this speech an unconscious admission of weakness?

It is honourable to have been so faithfully loved as was Madame de Staël, spite the haughty power whose whole might was bent against her. But she knew how to love well; and none were dearer to her heart than the mild, modest beauty whose attraction was so different from her own. What a contrast between these two women—the dark, plain, eloquent Madame de Staël, and the sweet, silent, angel face of Madame Récamier!

"Dear Juliet," she wrote to her once, "my

heart beats with the pleasure of seeing you!" And friendship never verged more on the ground of love than in the often-quoted adieu of another letter. "With reverence do I kiss your lovely face."

Being exiled from Paris, Madame de Staël went to Germany, with her children and Benjamin Constant. At Weimar she met Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland, and laid in that store of knowledge which she afterwards turned to such good account.

She was admired, eagerly sought and courted; yet the private letters of some of the illustrious men with whom she became acquainted show that the impression she produced was not altogether a favourable one. The opinions Schiller and Goethe exchanged in their correspondence concerning the celebrated foreigner, held much more of blame than of admiration. Schiller praised her sound frankness and sincerity, and looked on her as the interesting *fac-simile* of the cultivated French mind; but he set her feeling above her judgment; pitied her metaphysical ignorance; contended that she had no true perception of poetry; and that only the eloquent and impassioned features of fiction were revealed to her. He gave her, however, some of those critical qualities which she displayed in "De l'Allemagne"—decision, sagacity, and great quickness.

"The only unpleasant thing in her," he added, "is her extreme volubility, which compels her listener to become all ear; but the little French I know having enabled me to understand her conversation, you, who are so much more proficient, will enjoy it more easily."

There is impartiality in Schiller's opinion; Goethe's, as expressed in those letters, is rather ill-tempered than clear, or conveying any positive blame.

It was during this German journey, which she enjoyed so much, that Madame de Staël lost her father. A nine days' illness carried him off in April, 1804. News of his danger reached her in Berlin, but she was not told that he had already ceased to live. She travelled home in a fever of anxiety, and learned the truth at Weimar. He had been the great love of her life: his death was certainly its greatest grief. She had never been able to face the thought of losing him. Some one having once told her that M. Necker seemed older, she repelled the suggestion with a sort of anger, and declared that she would consider as her greatest enemy the person who would make such an assertion, and would never see that person again. She who thus unreasonably, though fondly, quarrelled with the natural decay of age, had now to face the bitter, the inexorable reality

of death. With her father the stay as well as the happiness of life seemed to depart. Her sorrow took the most childlike forms. Seeing her annoyed and perplexed about trifles, Madame Necker Saussure said to her—

"What matter? Why trouble yourself with this?"

"Ah! it is that I have no longer got my father," was her pitiful reply.

He was the great, the irreparable want of her nature, and to that one loss she referred every trouble, every sorrow. He was her sensitive point, too; and it is said that, whereas she never resented the evil which was said of herself, she never forgot or forgave that which was said of him.

By that strong love, and love deep as well as strong, we may test Madame de Staël's restlessness. She could never remain long with that adored father. Solitude killed her, and by solitude we must understand the society of her father, her children, and of the friends who, unless in the last bitter years of her exile, were constant visitors in Coppet. She had been reared in a crowd—an intellectual one indeed, but a crowd for all that. She required its variety, its changing aspect, its power, and its contests. Accordingly, Coppet was solitude. Doubly so was it

when she returned to it after her father's death; when cares, which he had spared her, fell on her daily, and reminded her that she had lost him for whom alone she had never ceased to be a child. She was his last and, save God, his only thought.

A political work of his had helped to irritate Bonaparte against Madame de Staël. Her father, even when fever was strong, wrote with a trembling hand a letter in which he assured the First Consul that his daughter had no share in that work, that she had even not approved his publishing it. The letter was sent, and did nothing but give Madame de Staël a new proof of his unfailing love; she was too formidable an enemy to be thus forgiven.

And the memory of that love never forsook her. It made her more religious, or, at least, strengthened her wavering faith in the immortality of the soul. It took a peculiar form, too, for one who was not merely born a Protestant, but who never ceased to hold and maintain strictly Protestant feelings, even when she was least a Christian. To her father's prayers in her favour she referred whatever good befell her, and she prayed to him as to a friend nearer than herself to the Source of all mercy. This domestic worship she wished to transmit to her children.

Years later she attributed to her father's intercession the happy marriage of her daughter Albertine; and when that daughter was in ill-health, she offered to send her M. Necker's portrait. To look at that friendly and beloved face had soothed her in pain, and what it had done to her she thought it might do to her daughter too.

What Madame de Staël was as a daughter she also was as a mother—fond and devoted. She had two sons and a daughter by her first marriage. She loved them infinitely, and "was passionately loved by them," said Madame de Broglie. But her love blended with firmness. She gave the law in her family, and exacted implicit obedience. In this, as in other matters, Madame de Staël showed a practical sense, which was the result of judgment, and especially of will.

She was naturally careless of the future. Her father used to say of her that she was like the savages who sell their huts in the morning, and know not where to sleep at night. Yet, after his death, when she had to administer her large fortune, she did so with equal prudence and economy. Her only great luxury was an accomplished cook, who travelled with her. "Why be surprised at the reception Madame de Staël gets in Germany?" said a German lady. "She will

may be sure of success, when she comes preceded by her reputation, and followed by her cook."

CHAPTER XI.

MADAME DE STAËL.

It was after her father's death that Madame de Staël's shattered health sent her to Italy; and to her sojourn in that beautiful country we owe "Corinne." She began it in 1805, on her return. It is not when we see places that we describe them best, or feel their beauty most. Memory has a marvellous power for making our perceptions of the beautiful keener and deeper.

Fouché, then Minister of Police, allowed Madame de Staël to approach Paris within twelve leagues; and going beyond the permission, in her longing for the very stones of her beloved city, she paid it some stolen night-visits, which were discovered, and had to be given up. She was near enough to superintend the publication of "Corinne." The success of this wonderful book

was great enough to waken the strange jealousy of Napoleon. He is said to have taken up his pen, and criticized it himself in the *Moniteur*—a singular proof of resentment, if true: the imperial ruler of Europe turning critic, and hating a novel.

Madame de Staël had to return to Coppet. Unable to remain quiet, and, since the delight of a *salon* and of political and literary conversation was denied her, anxious to seek elsewhere that intellectual excitement which was life for her, she paid another visit to Germany in 1807. Already, in 1804, she had brought home one of the Schlegels with her, though there was little love between him and Benjamin Constant. We get glimpses of this second visit in Bettina Brentano's jealous account of it.

"Madame de Staël will have sufficed him (Goethe)," she wrote. "He will not have remembered that I am. A renowned woman is a curious thing; no other can be compared with her. She is like spirit, with which the grain it is made from also cannot be compared. . . . I would rather be a simple grain of wheat than a celebrated woman, and rather he should break me for his daily bread than post like a dram through his head." The wilful girl and the celebrated woman met at Mayence, and supped side

by side. No other woman, Bettina declares, would take this dangerous post. She found it inconvenient. A crowd of men gathered and pressed around Madame de Staël. "Your adorers stifle me!" pettishly said Bettina. When she rose she saw a laurel leaf which Corinne had dropped after playing with it. She trod on it with true Italian jealousy, and pushed it aside. No less significant of the envy Madame de Staël could excite is Bettina's frank, graphic account of the interview between that celebrated lady and Goethe's mother, written for Goethe's benefit. The meeting was a curious one—Goethe's mother in all her state and stiffness, Madame de Staël as perplexed as good breeding could let her be.

"Je suis la mère de Goethe," was Madame Goethe's solemn declaration.

"Ah! j'en suis charmée," was the visitor's reply.

It is hard to believe that Madame de Staël did not do her best to charm the mother of the great man; but that mother's companion nothing could please. She spared Goethe nothing: from the yellow turban, the short waist that cannot have left the heart much room, down to the full red lips; and the petulant conclusion—"How canst thou be amiable, with such an unpleasant face to look at?" she wrote, as one resolved to quarrel

with the great authoress, whom she suspected her idol of admiring.

Bettina was jealous, but it is indeed true that Madame de Staël's first appearance was not pleasing; it is also true that she had the gift to destroy that first impression. She was about forty-two when young Bettina saw her; and later still, to the close of her life, she had the power to please and to charm. She was not young when Mademoiselle Cochelet, reader to Queen Hortense, met her. Like everyone, she was struck with her swarthy complexion and strongly-marked features; she could not understand that a woman so plain could ever have inspired a passion. But Madame de Staël spoke to the queen. Delicately and feelingly she reminded her that, had it been in her power, she, Madame de Staël, would not have been so long an exile; her countenance expressed nothing but softness and feeling, and Mademoiselle Cochelet found her beautiful, and acknowledged that she could be loved.

Madame de Staël spent a calm year in Vienna; then devoted two years in Switzerland to writing her great work, "De l'Allemagne." It was then that she and her friends amused themselves with those dramatic representations which made Coppet so celebrated and attractive. Madame de

Staël had a beautiful voice, and was an excellent actress. Her fine figure and lovely arms made her appear to advantage in the classic costume of the old tragedies. She acted with a passion and a vehemence that would never let her take off, without breaking it, the cross she wore in the part of Zaire; but though her range wanted variety, though the inspired Corinne was too apparent, the effect she produced was marvellous She moved to tears, and had the gift of also moving to laughter. She wrote some slight comedies, and excelled in the parts of soubrettes, says M. de Châteauvieux. Acting, indeed, became a passion; and, in his history of his own times, M. Guizot has given us a very characteristic instance of the extent to which this mere amusement absorbed Madame de Staël.

M. Guizot—then a young man—was travelling through Switzerland; he was introduced to Madame de Staël, and sat next her at dinner. He spoke of an article by Châteaubriand in the *Mercure*, and which had produced a sensation at the time of his departure from Paris. He quoted a sentence, word for word. Struck with the tone with which he had uttered the names of Nero and Tacitus, Madame de Staël seized the arm of the young stranger, and said, eagerly: "I am sure you would act tragic parts very well. Stay with

us, and appear in 'Andromaque.'" The future minister of Louis Philippe declined the flattering proposal, and 'Andromaque,' which could balance for a while her detestation of Napoleon in Madame de Staël's mind, had to do without him.

If Madame de Staël had not been tormented by her passion for Paris, how gay, happy, and enviable might seem her life in Coppet. Rich, hospitable, admired and loved by all who knew her—living in the daily converse of the finest minds—cultivating her own marvellous powers in the happy liberty which freedom from sordid cares alone can give—she moved like an intellectual sovereign in her empire. Few who approached her could resist that charm.

"Madame de Staël is a queen," wrote the poet Werner to his friend Schneffer; and he speaks with impassioned ardour of the charm by which she binds men of intellect within her magic circle, uniting the most opposed tempers in one worship. In this strange portrait, occasionally too free, Werner does not forget the two traits that always struck whosoever approached Madame de Staël—the marvellous power of her look, so full of soul; and the nobler power which her great and generous heart put into her ardent language. Werner's "Attila" was acted on the stage of Coppet, and the author may have influenced the man; but

more disinterested guests came to conclusions as enthusiastic

Œhlenschläger, the Danish poet, also talks of Madame de Staël as a queen and an enchantress: he, too, felt the charm of those kind dark eyes, so full of fire and softness—he, too, acknowledged the power with which she compelled minds the most opposed to live at peace within her sphere.

In the summer of 1810, her work being finished, Madame de Staël went to Blois, the limit within which she was allowed to approach Paris. The lovely and faithful Madame Récamier was with her, and a few other devoted friends soon joined her. But even in this quiet provincial town she was tormented by Imperial jealousy. She once went to the play. On leaving the house she was followed by a crowd, curious to see the feminine enemy of Napoleon. The minister of police wrote to the préfet that Madame de Staël kept her court; and the préfet, M. de Corbigny, a courteous and amiable man, repeated the speech to the exile.

"It is not power gives it to me," was her prompt reply.

"De l'Allemagne" was the result of six years labour. It was printed, and on the eve of publication. Madame de Staël sent a copy of her work to Napoleon, with a letter which a more generous man could not have read unmoved. It

spoke the language of entreaty, but without meanness. With a calm dignity, and a sincerity that neither allowed the writer to humble herself, nor yet to disguise the pain of her exile, she asked that painful exile to be revoked. She asked it not merely because it was a source of personal suffering, but because it threatened all the prospects of her children. But the very loftiness of her tone, with which a magnanimous heart would have been moved, seemed, to one whom flattery had spoiled, insolence worthy of punishment. By order of the minister of police, the ten thousand copies of "De l'Allemagne" were seized and destroyed, and Madame de Staël was ordered to leave France within three days. An attempt was made to get her manuscript, but her son succeeded in saving it. She gave the préfet an imperfect copy; and a few days delay being granted her, she reluctantly took her road to Switzerland and returned to Coppet.

She was now persecuted with a shameful meanness against which all her spirit and pride could scarcely bear up. The préfet of Geneva advised her to conciliate the Emperor by writing something about the infant King of Rome. Madame de Staël impatiently replied, "All I can do for him is to wish him a good nurse."

It was not enough that her sons could not enter

France, not even to pursue their studies—Madame de Staël was forbidden to go two leagues beyond Coppet. Her friend Schlegel, who had been with her for the last eight years educating her sons, was not allowed to remain in Geneva, or even in Coppet, as his Germanic presence would un-French Madame de Staël. The said Schlegel, having preferred the Phedra of Euripides to that of Racine, was certainly an unpatriotic companion.

The persecution now, indeed, extended from Madame de Staël herself to her friends. Two of the oldest and the most devoted, M. Mathieu de Montmorency and Madame Récamier, were exiled for having visited her at Coppet. To approach her became so perilous, that in the end this generous, large-hearted woman, who had never shrunk from friends in danger, and who found solitude intolerable and wasting, to whom friendship and society were as the breath of life, found herself well-nigh deserted. Unable to bear this wretched existence any longer, and urged by private reasons, of which the imperial police took the most ungenerous advantage, she resolved to escape from her prison, no matter at what cost.

Madame de Staël's separation from her husband was short, and never unfriendly. When the infirmities of age overtook him, she joined him with

their three children, and they were all on their way to Coppet when he died.

She refused to marry Benjamin Constant, but was not proof against the strange passion with which, without seeking it, she inspired M. de Rocca. He was twenty-seven, and remarkably handsome, but almost dying of five wounds received in the Peninsular war. They met in Geneva, in 1811. Madame de Staël was then forty-five, and she had never been handsome; but she saw him, pitied him, and, by that compassion, inspired him with the most violent passion.

"I shall love her so much that she will marry me in the end," he said, confidently.

"She is old enough to be your mother," said a prudent friend.

M. de Rocca's reply is characteristic of a man very much in love: "I am glad you have given me another reason for loving her."

The obstinacy of his passion, and her own pity for his state, prevailed on Madame de Staël to become his wife. But their marriage was kept secret; and hence, when, in the year 1812, she found herself on the eve of giving birth to a child —the only one born of this melancholy union— she would not submit to the humiliation of being compelled to confess her marriage, or, by concealing it, of injuring her reputation. Accordingly

flight was resolved on. On the 23rd of May, 1812, Madame de Staël, and her daughter, took their fans, stepped into a carriage, and went out for a drive before dinner. Their drive took them on to Berne, where they met Schlegel in a farm-house. At Salzbourg they were joined by M. de Rocca, and reached Vienna in June. But Austria was then under the yoke of France; and though so far Madame de Staël's flight had proved successful, she did not venture to wait in Vienna for the Russian passport which was to enable her to continue her journey—that is to say, to reach England, the goal of her wishes—by going round Northern Europe.

Madame de Staël has left a minute account of this journey, of its miseries and fatigues, which helped, indeed, to shorten her life. But even though she always referred her sufferings to their author, she could not exaggerate that terrible power which made a vast prison of Europe. A sense of closeness, of oppression, weighs on us as we follow her in her flight. Instead of that breadth of earth which travels in strange lands, of varied climate and changing speech, always suggest, we feel that the world is hemmed in within a few narrow shores, all guarded by a tyrant's might.

On went the fugitive, and wherever she went

she found the jealous Austrian police closely watching the enemy of the man who had humbled Austria. At length Russia was reached—on the 14th of July, the memorable anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, she entered the empire of the Czars. She fled to the land of the serfs from the despotism of the land of liberty. Through the vast Russian plains she went on to Moscow. She travelled fast, yet she seemed to feel the breath of Napoleon's great armies behind her. She saw the Kremlin—which Napoleon was to see too—in tragic events for ever memorable. From the steeple of the cathedral she gazed down on the oriental-looking city. She saw it glittering in the August sun, with its gilded domes, its fifteen thousand churches, and its palaces surrounded by vast gardens. A month later, the splendid scene was a heap of ashes and ruins—a month later, the beautiful villa where, as a guest, she dined with Rostopchin and his wife, was burned down by the hand of its own master.

Madame de Staël was received with great distinction in St. Petersburg. It was there, when she complimented the Emperor Alexander on the good fortune of his subjects in owning such a sovereign, that he made her the happy and well-known reply: "And even were it so, I should be but a fortunate accident."

From Russia Madame de Staël proceeded to Sweden. There she rested for some time, and completed her work "On Suicide," written in 1811, as a sort of atonement for the admiration she had formerly expressed for this criminal act. From Sweden she proceeded to England; and there we find her, in 1813, publishing "De l'Allemagne."

Mrs. Opie has left us some account of Madame de Staël, during this stay of hers in London. She saw at her house Lord Erskine, the Mackintoshes, the Romillys, the exiled majesty of the King of the Netherlands, and all that London then held of fashion and beauty; and by her testimony she has confirmed what we already knew of Madame de Staël's "ever-ready repartees and almost unrivalled eloquence." A humorous incident she has not forgotten. It is best told in her own words:

"She had recently left the court of Bernadotte, and from time to time indulged herself in descanting in his praise. At length, she produced a portrait in miniature of her favourite, painted in profile, and when it had gone round the greater part of the circle she put it into the hand of Sir Henry Englefield, well known as a man of virtu, science, and taste for the fine arts; and while she stood by the side of the chair on which he was indo-

lently lounging, she evidently waited with much anxiety the result of his examination. Carefully and long did he examine the painting, and then holding it up to the light which hung near him, he observed with slow, distinct utterance, and in rather a loud voice, 'He is like a ferocious sheep!' on which, uttering an exclamation of justly indignant surprise, Madame de Staël snatched the miniature from him, and turned hastily away."

Mrs. Inchbald she met, too, though not without some reluctance on that lady's part. Moore, who called her "that *begum* of literature," was not more willing to encounter her, even though Rogers tempted him with Mademoiselle de Staël. "She is very pleasing, and dances a shawl-dance beautifully. The mother, too, you would like: very good-natured—very lively and eloquent."

"Very good-natured" was likewise Byron's encomium, in his diary of 1813. Scott, however, though so keen an appreciator of feminine genius, did not know nor care to know her. We find him writing, December, 1813, to Miss Baillie, whom he had called "the great poet of the age:"

"All Edinburgh have been on tiptoe to see Madame de Staël, but she is not now likely to honour us with a visit, at which I cannot prevail on myself to be very sorry; for, as I tired of

some of her works, I am afraid I should disgrace my taste by tiring of the authoress too."

The triumphs of this English visit were saddened to Madame de Staël by the death of one of her sons, killed in a duel.

Napoleon's abdication in 1814 enabled her to return to Paris; when he left the island of Elba she did not await his return to go once more into exile. He was inclined for peace, however, and sent her word to come back, "for that her presence was required in Paris for constitutional ideas."

Madame de Staël's answer was both sharp and witty; she refused to go, and said:

"He has done without either a constitution or me for the last twelve years, and even now he is not much fonder of one than of the other."

We fear he was not. Yet, if we are to trust the memorial de Sainte Hélène, Napoleon was less bitter towards Madame de Staël in his captivity than she has proved herself towards him in her *Dix Années d'Exil.*

He indulged himself with some personal sneers at her love-sorrows and literary character, but he certainly did not exaggerate the injury she inflicted upon him.

"Coppet," he said, "was an arsenal against me; she either stirred up enemies against me, or combatted me herself; she was both Armida and

Clorinda." Alluding to the attempts made in her favour, and to the arguments which her friends and his adduced, that she was an adversary to be feared, and might be a useful ally, he confessed as much himself to Las Casas. "It is certain, that if she had taken to me, instead of running me down as she did, I could have been a gainer; for her position and her talent made her govern coteries, and every one knows their influence in Paris."

"After all," he said another time, "no one can deny that Madame de Staël was a woman of great talent and infinite *esprit;* she will remain."

The long quarrel between them, which cost Madame de Staël so dear, and from which the great soldier himself did not come out quite scathless, he treated with a sort of good-humoured coolness edifying to behold:

"Spite all the harm she has said of me, and without reckoning all that she will say yet, I am very far from holding her as a wicked woman. We simply played at war: that is all."

Terrible play Madame de Staël found it. The disasters of Waterloo carried away the last vestiges of that despotism against which she had striven so long. She hated the tyrant, but the triumph of the foreigner was hateful. With questionable taste Canning said to her one day,

"Well, Madame, we have conquered you."

"Give us the *tête-à-tête* and we shall see," she quickly replied.

Her shattered health and M. de Rocca's delicate lungs took her to Italy; there in February, 1816, she married her daughter Albertine, a beautiful and charming girl, to the Duke of Broglie. She wrote to a friend: "I bless God, and my father, who has obtained for me, from that God worthy of all goodness, a friend for my daughter, so worthy of esteem and affection."

It was no doubt a love-match; for Madame de Staël's ideal—love in marriage—never left her, and she used to say, pleasantly enough, "I shall compel my daughter to marry for love."

Her health, and that of M. de Rocca, sank fast. It was a pitiable sight to see them both when they returned to Paris. She struggled best against disease; he had to be supported and almost carried when they paid visits together. As her illness progressed, Madame de Staël took opium to secure a few hours' sleep. When she woke in the morning her maid gave her writing materials, and she wrote till twelve. A looking-glass was then brought to her, that she who had always had the deepest horror of age and death might see the progress of both on her suffering features. On one of those sad mornings Château-

briand called upon her. He found her with her spectral-looking husband, who retired silently; she was flushed with fever, but her look had not lost its charm and its beauty.

"Bon jour, my dear Francis," she said, "I suffer, but that does not prevent me from liking you."

The illustrious author of the "Génie de Christianisme" is said not to have returned the feeling, though the gentle influence of Madame Récamier made him deal kindly enough with Corinne in his memoirs; but the sympathy and attraction he never could feel for her, she always instinctively felt for him. It was to him she said, not long before her death, "I have always been the same—sad and lively; I have loved God, my father, and liberty."

Great sweetness to all who approached her marked the sufferings of her last illness. At length, on the 17th of July, 1817, at five in the morning, she expired, in the arms of Benjamin Constant, says one account. That he sat up with her in the night is certain—a bitter vigil. Grief hastened M. de Rocca's approaching end; he died six months after the woman he had so passionately loved.

It is rather hard to say so, but it would appear that, save by her own near friends, Madame de

Staël was not much regretted. A letter, by no means a good-natured one, considering that it dealt with an old and tried friend, of General d'Arblay to his wife, shows us how ironical and cold the feelings of a good many were with regard to the once worshipped Corinne.

In Joubert's works we find another letter, tender and penetrating, like everything which fell from that delicate pen, and which shows us more plainly still how weak is the hold of genius on the human heart. It is written a few days after Madame de Staël's death, and addressed to his friend, Madame de Vintimille.

After speaking on various subjects, he alludes to his failing health. "Happily," he adds, "my heart is still living, but it lives entirely for you alone; perhaps, too, for Madame de Staël, whom I have never seen, whom I avoided a thousand times, who seemed to me a fatal and pernicious being, whose death, though I hold it a good, yet saddens me when I see the coldness with which the friends of that woman, so long worshipped, and still so living, have seen her go down to the grave! Everywhere I have sought for regrets—not one true one has been expressed; her very neighbourhood has cursed her, I know not why. Benjamin Constant was two hours with M. Frisell, on the day of her death, and he never

mentioned it. When M. Frisell reproached him for this, a few days later, he answered, 'I thought you knew it.' The day of praise has been displaced for her; she received it during life—beyond life there was none. I have been truly grieved at this calamity of so great a fame; and when I saw that no one would think of the poor woman, I set to thinking of her alone, and to regret, with inconsolable bitterness, the bad use she has made of so much mind, of so much strength and goodness. She died, as you know, Madame de la Roche, or de la Rocca; and this, which enlivens my sadness a little, has not made scandal busy. But for the newspapers the close of a life which was so tumultuous would not have made the least noise."

And was it so indeed? Did the enemy of Napoleon, the generous and large-hearted woman, leave so little sorrow behind her that a stranger long unfriendly thought himself bound to mourn for her with such intellectual, refined mourning as he could feel, and the unseen dead could inspire. It is sad to believe it, and yet we think it was true: save by a devoted few, Madame de Staël was not lamented. Her worshippers were sun-worshippers, who watched her setting, and soon forgot the light on which night had closed. The sad but inevitable destiny of all literary fame!

It is not easy to form a correct opinion of so complex a character as was that of Madame de Staël; private sources of information, which the future may yet unveil, are now closed, through the natural prudence and jealousy of a great family. For instance, there must exist letters of hers. They are said to have been graceful, though careless; she wrote them whilst she talked with her friends—but such as they are, they must throw much light on her feelings and real nature; they are kept back, however, and though, in an age which profanes daily the holy feelings of friendship and trust, such reserve is worthy of all respect, it often renders inquiry perplexed and useless. There are few persons living in recent times, and having left so great a name, who are in reality less known to us than is Madame de Staël. Her errors are authentic enough to leave a stain on her name as a woman, but not to mollify the severity of our judgment. Her late marriage with M. de Rocca is the truest clue we have to this portion of her life; it was a folly, but an honourable one, and it does more to absolve her than all that her friends have said in her favour. The woman who at forty-five could still hope and believe in love in marriage, and endeavour to secure it to herself, may have been an erring, but surely she was not a vicious woman.

But setting apart even this important and delicate feature of Madame de Staël's existence, and which relatives and friends very naturally wished to keep in the shade, it may still be said that we know little of her. Madame Necker Saussure, her adopted sister, she who watched by the death-bed of her beloved father, has written an able and interesting account of her friend, the best there is—but it is a panegyric, it is not a biography. In that account, however, Madame Necker Saussure makes some admissions, two of which, though only casual remarks, are perhaps a fair key to both the good and the evil which there was in this remarkable woman.

"Seen from without, the life of Madame de Staël would not answer the expectations one has a right to conceive from it—and who can ever enter her being to say what she has felt?"

The latter remark is true of every human life; the best, the purest, the noblest part of it is revealed to the eye of God alone; but we think the first admission, that the outward life of Madame de Staël failed in something essential, is more than sufficient. Sorrow, genius, and fame she had in abundance; she had, too, some of the noblest gifts God can give to a human being—enthusiasm and an ardent and generous heart. What then could be wanting? We think that

without wronging Madame de Staël, above all, without perverting the words of a friend from their true meaning, another remark of Madame Necker Saussure's will confirm all we do know, and give us the clue to much that we know not, and need not care to learn. Speaking of the change which years and experience wrought in Madame de Staël's opinions, Madame Necker de Saussure adds:

"Her scruples, which had always had the consequences of her actions for their object, became more and more fixed on their motives."

It is scarcely necessary to point out that a life in which the consequences of actions were weighed in preference to the motives must have been full of deficiencies. The consequences of our actions, good or evil, are in the hands of God; our motives alone are ours, and to have had a leaning towards result, and a certain coldness to principle, is the weak point in Madame de Staël's life. A great and generous heart could save her from much, but even that could not save her from all; hence we think the sense of disappointment any keen searcher must always feel on entering the private existence of one so celebrated. Even at her best it is her impulses much more than her motives that are good. It would be a nice and delicate task to say where impulse ended and motive

began with her; how far she drew on the nobility of her nature, and allowed her feelings to sway her judgment. Towards the close of her life she was certainly conscious of error, and she bore against herself that sad testimony which the lives of the wisest and the best can confirm: "I never was wrong but some sorrow came of it."

This preference of impulse to cold duty was her great error, and her great sorrow. It is in all her earliest works, and it made her too easily pleased with their moral teaching. Satisfied with religious impulse, she did not guard her impassioned heart with strong religious precepts of right or wrong; above all, she kept aloof from motives, which are hard, definite things, bitter to deal with, and she indulged herself with visions of consequences, in which, if there be truth in human life, she must have been mistaken nine times out of ten. It does infinite credit to the nature of Madame de Staël, that, acting on theories so imprudent, she yet remained what she was —a being both good and great. And thus it is, no doubt, that though she had enemies and detractors, she was on the main judged with so much tenderness. Her pious friend, Mathieu de Montmorency, knew her errors, deplored them, and loved her tenderly to the last. There was an ardour in her goodness, which, if it was pe-

rilous to her own soul and heart, was irresistibly fascinating; we have heard much of her wonderful eloquence; we hear still more of her kindness, forbearance, and inexhaustible power of forgiving. She was not always true to herself; but who can record that she ever betrayed or forsook a friend, that she meanly resented a wrong, and that in a life so active, and so extensive in its action, she ever voluntarily inflicted the smallest injury on a human being? If the weak point of her life was a want of fixed principle with regard to her own conduct, a generous magnanimity in all that concerned others was its noblest feature. Hence her enemies were obliged to attack her person, her books, or her political principles; there was nothing else for them; not one of those terrible meannesses which so often make us shrink from the lives of the famous and the great. She has been dead forty years and more, and, far from decreasing in esteem, she has risen. A lenient veil has been thrown over her errors; what could not be denied has not been intruded, and all that was so honourable in her career has been more clearly shown and more dearly prized as years have sped on—because its rarity has been more acutely felt. Her singular generosity has done for her own repute what it did for the life of a condemned man whose pardon she solicited on her death-bed, and who

was allowed to live on the day that closed her existence. She never knew it; that good deed survived her, and the guilty wretch enjoyed the sweetness of life when she lay cold in her grave. Even so have her virtues outlived her errors, and thrown them so far into the shade, that it is almost an act of daring to call them forth, even at the voice of truth.

CHAPTER XII.

"DELPHINE."

BESIDES some tales which she published in 1795, Madame de Staël wrote two novels, one of which is world-known. "Delphine" has never enjoyed the popularity of "Corinne." It is more of a novel, and Madame de Staël was not a good novelist. Her mind was too metaphysical for romance. Incidents were nothing with her unless they had a meaning. Her characters were controversial; her subjects were long arguments. She wrote but two novels: woman's love was the hero of the one, and woman's genius of the other.

Châteaubriand said of her that had she not spoken so well she would have written better. We may add, had she not thought so much, her novels would have been more natural and pleasing. There is but one good way of telling a story

—it is to relate it in the spirit in which children and the ignorant relate what they wish you to know—in simple good faith, like any old epic.

This plan Madame de Staël's genius, both subtle and deep, could not follow. "Corinne" is a splendid guide-book—"Delphine" is a history of passion, from which all that does not bear upon passion has been excluded. It is said to happen at the time of the French Revolution. It might happen in Fairyland, for all we know of that gloomy crisis, until it is brought in to produce the catastrophe. Love is all that Delphine and Léonce live for. They move in a storm of feeling, that does not always bear away the colder reader. He loses breath in such inaccessible regions, and basely longs for the coolness and repose of the quiet valleys.

This absence of life's tame realities from fiction was part of a system. The same system made the author declare that the dogmas of any religion are opposed to imagination and thought, and therefore exclude them from her pages. Taste must guide in this delicate matter; but to banish dogmatic religion from fiction means that it should be left out from life—for what is fiction but a life more noble, more imaginative than the real? The dogmas of religion must be blended with our whole existence, or they are nothing—

nay, we are better without them—and if a tale soar on sublime wing beyond the belief which guides daily life, it is weak, it has no hold on reality.

To avoid the check of religious dogma on the imagination, Madame de Staël took a sweeping measure: Léonce is an atheist; Delphine a deist; Mathilde, the prudish and tiresome woman, a rigid Catholic. They are all three as different as their individual opinions, and though deficient in reality, the story is based on a very just and striking contrast of character. That contrast, and the moral of the tale, are to be found in the epigraph on the title-page, taken by Madame de Staël from the writings of her mother, Madame Necker: "A man must know how to brave opinion—a woman how to submit to it."

The misfortunes of Léonce and Delphine spring from their disobedience of that axiom. Léonce is the slave of honour, or rather of what the world calls honour. Delphine is the child of impulse. Accustomed to homage and respect, she neither minds opinion nor fears blame. Her independence verges on imprudence. It estranges her lover; gives arms to her enemies; encourages her in a forbidden love; ruins her reputation, and ultimately, and because Léonce is the slave of the world he is, it tends to their mutual ruin.

The tale is written in the epistolary form. Madame de Staël found it established, and it gave her many opportunities of developing principles she wished to advocate. The opening letters introduce us to a young, enthusiastic, and beautiful widow, Delphine—Madame d'Albemar—who munificently presents a splendid estate to Mathilde, the daughter of her cousin and friend, Madame de Vernon. This lady is sweet, fascinating, and perfidious—Mathilde is honest, and rigidly devout. Delphine's noble present is meant to ensure her marriage with Léonce de Mondeville, who is as handsome as a hero of romance, and as proud as a Spanish mother could help to make him. No sooner do he and Delphine meet than passion seizes them both. No thought of dishonour or wrong checks either in the dawn of this love.

We may wonder, indeed, and ask: Is this his boasted honour?—is that her generosity? But passion is too strong for principle in the heart of Léonce, and Delphine, we know, is the child of impulse. She gives estates from impulse, and from impulse, too, she takes another woman's lover. Broken promises and perfidy are frequent enough in life, but it is hard to find the romantic Léonce, the lofty Delphine, as mean as common mortals. It is the contrast between the singular

virtues attributed to this pair, and their actions—ungenerous, dishonourable, and often base—that is the real immorality of the tale. What sort of virtues are they that scarcely save their owners from an error?

Delphine's compunction at taking Léonce from Mathilde exercises no influence on her conduct. It is Madame de Vernon's perfidy, not Delphine's generosity, that secures him to his betrothed. She loves her future husband, cold though she looks; and calm, lovely, sweet Madame de Vernon, who seems blind, but is not, lets matters go on, and is quite resolved to make M. de Mondeville keep his promises. Indolent, but penetrating, she bides her time. She knows that the imprudence and trust of Delphine, that the jealous impetuosity of Léonce, will do her work.

Madame d'Albémar favours a last meeting between a lady and her lover. The husband, who has followed them, is killed in a duel, and her reputation is ruined. To Madame de Vernon the credulous Delphine commits her fate, her love, her honour. This faithful friend undertakes to prove Delphine's innocence to Léonce, and so skilfully does she work on his jealousy and pride that he marries Mathilde. Concealed within the shadow of a pillar, Delphine sees him lead her cousin to the altar; she hears him utter the irre-

vocable vows that divide them for ever, and she sinks in a deathlike swoon on the pavement of the church.

Delphine has lost all—her lover, his esteem; the promises of youth and life are engulphed in one dreary wreck. He is not less wretched. In vain is the husband of Mathilde convinced that she who alone gave life its joy is perfidious; furious jealousy far more than contempt is the feeling that perfidy awakens. Mistrust at having been deceived soon follows; he writes to Delphine and tells her how his passions have been exasperated. She is generous enough not to clear herself for his innocent wife's sake, but she taxes Madame de Vernon with her treachery.

This lady is the best-drawn character in the book. She is said to have been suggested by Talleyrand himself; and she is a felicitous mixture of good and evil, of art and truth, that make her look like a portrait. Her quiet manners, her wonderful though indolent finesse, the ardent love which Delphine feels for her, almost fascinate us into forgetting that she is a dissembler, and a pitiless one. She is perfidious, but never repulsive.

The passages between her and Delphine—the art of one, the generous simplicity of the other—are very beautiful. The grief of Delphine on learning that her trust and friendship have been

betrayed, a grief that outweighs the joy of being thought innocent by her lover—is a noble trait in her character. She loves, but passion cannot possess her whole heart; her friend is false, her first friend, her most dearly loved one, could betray her, and she feels deep sorrow and but little anger. It is Madame de Vernon who shews and feels most displeasure at so unwelcome an explanation; it is she who, spite her displeasure, remains cool. Delphine is indignant, but there is exquisite tenderness in her reproaches; her tears flow as she utters them, for she cannot forget in a moment the love of six years; and it is not she, it is the cold and heartless Madame de Vernon, who says that they must meet no more.

With great art the author has chosen this moment, when our forbearance towards this perfidious lady is wearing out, to make her die, repent, justify Delphine to Léonce, and plead for her innocent and ignorant daughter, by imploring the forgiveness and dying in the arms of her injured friend. But there is neither art nor good taste in the sudden appearance of Léonce, nor in the insults he heaps on his dying enemy; and incredible is the letter which, two days after his mother-in-law's death, M. de Mondeville writes to Delphine. In very eloquent but very plain language, he puts by his marriage with Mathilde as

an unfortunate accident, and claims Delphine as his.

Can any amount of passion excuse insult so gross? A man's principles may be free, but unless he is a fanatic in the cause of immorality, he rarely goes so far as to extend them to a woman's virtue. Jealousy and respect keep sacred the principle that woman must be pure. To attempt her seduction is not merely a crime, it is also insolence, which no sophistry can extenuate. When Léonce, the proud gentleman so jealous of his fair name that the punishments of the next world seem nothing to him in comparison with shame in this—Léonce, who has made honour and reputation his second conscience, who relinquished Delphine on suspicion, on shadowy proofs, and who made no attempt to win her back because he no longer held her innocent—when such a man, in short, tells a woman that he cannot live without her, and that his wife is no obstacle to their passion, what does he do but insult her deliberately? Honour and its laws are for him—what pride, what honour, what dignity does he acknowledge in her? None that his pleasure cannot violate.

Delphine will not so far forget the existence of Mathilde as to become the mistress of her husband, but she sees him daily. Their love she de-

clares will make them better. The ennobling, religious power of love is to the last one of the favourite sentiments of these lovers. But to ennoble, love must first be pure; wrong cannot lead to right, nor sin to God. The love of Léonce has always been exacting, it soon grows odious. Delphine will not become his mistress; she even resolves to leave him. Exasperated at the thought, M. de Mondeville threatens to kill himself in her presence, and attempts to extort from her a guilty and sacrilegious vow in the very church in which he was married. She faints with horror, and wakens in a burning fever. Scarcely is she recovered when his insane jealousy ruins her reputation. Women keep aloof from her, men insult her openly, and M. de Mondeville dare not for her own sake defend her. His pious wife, who knows, who suspects nothing, takes Delphine's part, and, in a transport of grief at friendship so unmerited, Delphine confesses that she loves her husband. This strange candour ruins the happiness of Mathilde; but she asserts her rights with firmness and dignity; and Delphine retires to a convent in Switzerland, where Léonce cannot pursue her.

The story, vehement enough till now, becomes frantic. We may learn something from the struggles of virtue against passion, even though they should be weak and passion fervent. It is

right we should know that duty, though obeyed, may seem stern and cold—that virtue is not easy, and, alas! not always pleasing—that there are delightful errors against which wisdom, a generous heart, many virtues, cannot always guard. Hitherto Delphine has done wrong; but knowing that it was wrong, now wrong shall become right, and she shall say so.

The Nemesis of injured love follows her to Switzerland. For not challenging Léonce, who had insulted him, one of her admirers, M. de Valorbe, is a disgraced man. He yielded to Delphine's prayers; on her he is avenged. He lures her to a meeting for the purpose of ruining her reputation. He succeeds to the full bent of his wishes. The Superior of the convent is the aunt of Léonce. She knows that Mathilde's life is drawing to a close, and resolved that Madame d'Albémar shall not marry her nephew, she threatens to expel her unless she takes the vows. Delphine submits; she utters promises to Heaven, in the sanctity of which she does not believe—promises which, on the death of Mathilde, and the arrival of Léonce, she does not hesitate to break. Léonce threatens to commit suicide unless she will become his wife; and Delphine, convinced that her vows are not binding—and resolved that

they shall not be—leaves the convent, and departs with her lover.

Léonce, at least, is an atheist. How can he venerate what he denies? But Delphine is not; and who that ever dared to confess a God would venture to say that vows can be deliberately made to that supreme being for a worldly convenience —a respectable home in this case—and as deliberately broken when that convenience has ceased? It is not Christianity that has a right to complain here—it lies beyond such arguments; it is the much-damaged cause of Deism.

If Madame de Staël held Delphine innocent in this, and laid her guilt to custom and society, she did not violate poetic truth so far as to reward it with happiness. When a woman has given up her reputation, her pride, her reserve, to a man, and in many respects her conscience, it is with that man that her happiness lies for the future. This Delphine does for Léonce; and his conduct, now that his wishes are on the eve of their fulfilment, is base and inconsistent. People point their finger at the fugitive nun and her lover; and that lover, whom duty and honour had ever found so resolute, shame cows and maddens. In her despair Delphine vows that she will never become his wife, and Léonce enables her to keep at least that vow: without warning or adieu he

leaves her to join the Royalist forces and fight against the French Republicans. He loves her—and he leaves her: was all that fury of passion to end thus? He has poisoned her whole life; and when his work is done he protests that he adores her—and he goes. She is an angel in his eyes, but the world has judged and condemned her—it is enough. Love is said to be all-enduring; but we doubt if there are many women who could follow a lover so cold at heart, though in words so impassioned. But Delphine discovers the route he has taken, pursues the fugitive—for what purpose we are not told—and reaches Verdun to find that he is a prisoner of war. She intercedes for him in vain; he is tried and sentenced to be shot. Delphine is allowed to spend in his dungeon what is to be the last night of his life. There might be pathos in the close of this ill-fated love, but for its singular and painful mixture of profane and religious feelings. That, on the threshold of the next world, Léonce should abjure his bitter creed of the soul's annihilation, and ask his more religious mistress to impart to him her own hopes of a God, merciful and forgiving, and of a life to come where love shall not be guilty or proscribed, is true enough to human nature, and to the heart's impulses. But when Delphine, on asking to accompany Léonce to the fatal field

of death, is told that only a priest is thus privileged, and replies that she will fulfil a priest's ministry for the man she loves—and when, as a preparation to that ministry, she takes poison—the least pious may surely wish that religion had been left alone. Delphine expires before her lover, and one grave receives them.

Such was the *denouement* of Delphine for twenty years. Another ending was found amongst Madame de Staël's papers, and with it the request that it might be substituted for the first. It is less painful and less violent, though consistent with the characters of the hero and heroine. Delphine leaves the convent and retires with her lover to his seat of Mondeville. He loves her; but the sense of her disgrace, which he must share if she becomes his wife, throws him into a fever. In his delirium he utters words which she understood but too well. Léonce recovers; but the blow is given, her heart is broken—and Delphine dies. She dies in his arms, looking at the rising sun, happy to leave a life which might have been so blest, and has been so bitter.

Léonce knows that his miserable pride has killed the woman he loved, and he will not survive her. He joins the Royalist forces, and falls in the first action.

Madame de Staël's reasons for substituting this

ending to the first were that the execution of Léonce and the suicide of Delphine were considered as too violent by her friends, and as recalling too vividly the revolutionary period; but though she was thus amenable to literary criticism, nothing could make her consider founded the want of morality which from the first was imputed to Delphine. This was a point on which she always felt and betrayed great soreness. Yet that the tendency of this book is bad, that it leads to the violation, not to the observance, of moral law, few can doubt. In vain Madame de Staël declared that she had made Delphine so wretched, "because she could not forgive her for loving a married man;" in vain her guilty passion is not gratified, but fearfully punished; this does not efface the immoral because untrue fact that she has every virtue and practises none. She is the most perfect as she is the loveliest of beings, but she can resist no temptation. Generosity, honour, the world, religion, are alike powerless to restrain her. The meanest understanding will refuse to believe this; in so far the book is not dangerous, but what is the meaning of such teaching?

Besides the general moral of the story, that implied in the epigraph—that man must brave opinion, and woman submit to it—was used by

Madame de Staël to unfold three arguments, which she elaborated with some care: the superiority of natural over revealed religion as a rule of life—the necessity of divorce for general happiness in marriage—the ennobling nature of love.

Madame de Staël admired the Gospel, but she did not love its restrictions. Any rule beyond Deism she considered the bondage of mind and heart. She mistook the stringency of the law with its close observance. The holiest lives tell a very different story. Do they, does anything human fulfil the splendid idea of the Gospel? Were the first Christians, the apostles of Christ themselves, so faultless that we need fear too cold a perfection—if perfection can indeed be cold—as the result of Christianity? Yet whilst Madame de Staël claimed entire liberty of mind and heart, she inconsistently maintained that natural religion was sufficient to guide either. Natural religion is a beautiful instinct, but it is not a law. There is a splendid and alluring vagueness in Deism, but its code of morals is unknown to us. It is the silent unrevealed God. Conscience, which habit can deaden, the most common and most frightful of human calamities; reason, which is strong or weak according to the intellectual powers; society, that often errs—must be man's guide in Deism. Delphine, who pleads

the cause of Deism, assures us that it leads to every virtue: that may be; her arguments are often beautiful and eloquent, but her own conduct is one still more convincing. What undoes her? Not her impulses—they are good; marry her to Léonce, and she is virtuous; but her absolute want of principle. She does not know what is lawful, what is forbidden. She has sublime ideas of a supreme being and immortality, but she takes another woman's husband, breaks solemn vows, and commits suicide. It is not wise to attack the moral part of Christianity by arguments thus supported, or to trust the cause of Deism to such a defender.

Madame Necker, blest in her marriage, wrote against divorce; Madame de Staël, unhappy in hers, pleaded in its favour. Unhappy marriages, she said, led to vice; and she concluded that, to have virtuous unions, divorce must be made easy. Elise, for instance, married an avaricious and disagreeable Dutchman. She procures a divorce from him, not so much because M. de Lebensei is a younger and more amiable man, as because "she could practise no virtue" with the unfortunate Dutchman. With M. de Lebensei virtue is as easy as it is delightful. But life has other ties besides those of married ties, which spring from it; are they to be broken every time they make

virtue too hard a task? Then by what law shall the stream be kept sacred, if the fountain-head is to be violated with so much facility? Yet love in marriage, and marriage lasting till death, was certainly Madame de Staël's aim. It was not the weakness of the human heart that she meant to consecrate, but its rights that she wished to guard. A noble, womanly aim; but why begin at the wrong end? Divorce is but a palliative—the root of the evil is the recklessness with which men and women enter on the married state; the want of honour, forbearance, and love they show in the accomplishment of its duties. Teach how to marry well, that is the first lesson. If you cannot, of what use is divorce?

It is not because marriage is binding that Léonce is wretched. It is not Delphine's imprudence, his own credulity and Madame de Vernon's treachery, that have undone him. It is that he had no respect for marriage, that he deliberately desecrated a tie which to be blest must be held holy. Such errors make unhappy marriages, and it is possible to commit more than one. Roman ladies reckoned theirs by consulships. What if, after a few years, M. de Lebensei had not proved the right man to be virtuous with, and Delphine the true wife of her husband's heart? The men and women whose temper leads them into such

mistakes are rarely patient; there is, besides, a natural wish for easy happiness in the human heart, a wish that often prevails over virtue. But at least we call it guilt; to make vice legal, to declare that solemn ties can be broken when they have ceased to please, could only guard the rights of the weak or the faithless.

The ennobling nature of love who can doubt? It has been the theme of poets and sages—it is the boast and the precept of Christianity. But surely the love of Léonce and Delphine is not ennobling. In vain are they saved from the last fall, and society is made the scapegoat. The love which, like that of Léonce, has no faith in the loved one—the love which, like that of Delphine, is weak and debasing—never was a great love.

Of the impression which it produces on the reader—the fever, excitement, and abhorrence it alternately awakens—it is hard to speak. Love like this is not the blessing of the good, but the curse of the wicked. It is a love that would make one hail indifference with transport, for it would turn Eden itself into a place of torment. A fine genius, an eloquent and impassioned style, could not make "Delphine" a good book or a fine novel. New laws of right and wrong must be acknowledged ere "Delphine" is thought moral,

and the taste of the public must change greatly before six volumes of such love metaphysics can charm many readers.

And yet, such is the magic of language, of noble thoughts, and generous feelings, that, with all its errors and deficiencies, "Delphine" commands attention, and more than attention; for it suggests moods of thought and speculation on some of the saddest and most perplexing problems of society and life. The tale ends, and leaves them unsolved, and society has not taken up the challenge. It has looked on "Delphine" as on the error of a fine intellect, and not troubled itself with the doctrines it meant to advocate.

As a novel "Delphine" has very few merits, but they are of a high order. An impassioned style, often incorrect, but always fascinating, bears us on. Madame de Vernon is drawn by a masterly hand. Delphine herself is irresistibly attractive; she charms and irritates us incessantly. We see her virtues melt away in unsubstantial desires, but we cling to the belief that she might have been good. There is, however, one attribute of a fine nature which never deserts her, in the wreck of every other excellence. Delphine is full of faith. Her friend, her lover, inspire her with boundless trust. Through perfidy or passion they betray her, yet

an irresistible impulse makes her forgive and believe again, until, trust being utterly broken, forgiveness alone is possible.

That forgiveness many a reader extends to her. Better judgment forbids it; but the charm, sweet and potent, of a great heart is on us, and we yield—not convinced, but conquered.

CHAPTER XIII.

"CORINNE."

A COLDNESS to nature, which rarely co-exists with an ardent and powerful imagination, has long remained one of the traditional attributes of Madame de Staël. She lived at a time when Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, and Châteaubriand had made wild and romantic scenery fashionable; when the Alpine height, the torrent, and the mountain-path had thrown into oblivion the sweet pastoral landscape of Fénélon's "Telemachus," and of Gessner's and Florian's pseudo-idylls; and though she did not take part with the vanquished school, she had the frankness to declare that she preferred the Rue du Bac to the shores of Lake Leman. Indeed her sincerity on this point never wavered. She was walking once with the two Schlegels and M. Fauriel. The

latter chanced to admire the prospect before them. With a smile Madame de Staël asked if they had not yet got beyond the country. She seemed to think it a sort of conventional prejudice—and so it was for her, no doubt. She confessed to M. Molé, another admirer of landscape, that, were it not for the power of opinion, she would not open her window to see the Bay of Naples for the first time, whereas she would gladly travel five hundred leagues to talk with a new and brilliant mind.

There is nothing startling in the fact that one so richly dowered in mind and heart should fail in something. There is no nature so wealthy but has its poverty. But if we understand Madame de Staël's indifference to landscape, we cannot conciliate it with the perplexing admiration she professed for the northern school of poetry—for Macpherson's "Ossian" and Thomson's "Seasons"—works which require not merely a general sympathy with nature, but a delicate intuition into all her mysteries. Madame de Staël could drive through a fine landscape, nor raise her eyes from the book she was reading. Her own descriptions are suggestive, not of images, but of fine thoughts. Yet her indifference was more apparent than real. Nature has many voices, which all do not hear alike. In the north her

aspect is often veiled, like that of the Egyptian goddess. The faithful worshipper alone sees beauty in the clouded skies, the dreary moors, the misty mountains. In the south beauty need not be sought. The beauty of earth and sky, the serenity and repose of the very air, are enough for the senses and the heart. It was in a southern land that the Greek Menander thought the aspect of heaven and earth joy sufficient for a lifetime.

What geographical limits do for nations, temper often does for individuals. Minds are southern or northern. To some, the calmness of the sky, the glory of the sun, are the fulness of beauty. Others, more wayward, more fitful, require mysterious haunts—the lake, the waterfall, the wild heath, and the mountain. Of these, Madame de Staël certainly was not. The clear Paris sky, the tempered Paris sun, delighted her more than the austere beauties which surround the city and the lake of Geneva. Her admiration of Macpherson's forgeries, and of Thomson's penetrating pictures of nature, sprang more from the feeling with which she regarded everything English, than from a genuine sympathy with the misty heroes of the one, or the calm English pastorals of the other. She was deeply convinced that the political institutions of a country ennoble its literature, and it would have cost her a pang to acknowledge that

poets born and bred under a constitution could be inferior to poets whom despotism had nurtured.

In its indifference to detail, and to the sad, suffering aspect of northern nature, her mind was a southern mind. When she visited Italy, after her father's death, she found what she could feel best—the charm of climate. That something "hostile," which repelled her in the north, became, in the south, "a friendliness" of nature to man. In every page of "Corinne" is conveyed a sense of light, breadth, and warmth, tempered by repose; and few works render so well this great characteristic of Italian scenery. The beneficial influence on her mind of a fine climate, of a poetic race, of noble works of art, and of classic memorials is equally apparent in this, one of her greatest works. The Italian aspect of "Corinne" is beautiful—it is the foreign element that is uninteresting and cold. It was introduced for the sake of contrast, yet Corinne herself knew well that "nothing spoils works of imagination like having an aim."

This precept is constantly violated in "Corinne." Madame de Staël wrote it to unburthen her mind. Classic Italy, her ruins, her works of art; grief for her father's death; personal disappointments; resentment that society should show more severity for the errors than admiration for the splendid

gifts of genius; modern Italy, her people and her literature—all found their place in "Corinne," and formed that great whole. "Corinne, or Italy," is the story of a high-souled woman of genius, and it is a descriptive, philosophic, and literary account of Italy. It is true that Italy rivals Corinne as we read, and that Corinne weakens the impression produced by Italy; but though a novel ought to be nothing but a novel, and though fiction detracts from the reality which is the charm of a book of travels, Madame de Staël's attempt was like Byron's, later, in "Childe Harold," singularly felicitous. It suited her genius — too metaphysical for fiction, and too imaginative for mere truth. "Delphine," which is much more of a novel than "Corinne," is a far inferior work. If we take away its vigorous style, "Delphine" might have been written by any one—it has no striking originality of character, incident, or story to recommend it. "Corinne," on the contrary, could only be written by Corinne herself. "Delphine" can be read and forgotten—"Corinne" seems written in light. It has the fine distinctness which is one of the most remarkable attributes of a great book.

In both tales the author fails when she forsakes eloquence and analysis, passion and character, to enter into the minutiæ of daily life; but whereas

the deficiency is awkward in "Delphine," in "Corinne" we do not feel it. We are carried beyond it into a region of art and song—we wander through an idealised Italy—we live with an inspired creature, who, though not the fulfilment of the woman of genius so many have vainly attempted to paint, is the most successful delineation we possess, as yet, of that rare combination —the sublime gift of song, clothed in the fragile form and beauty of woman.

And imperfectly drawn though she is, what a being is that Corinne! Delphine was a lady of the world, with the faults and virtues of a disciple of Jean Jacques. Corinne belongs to no particular time; her youth in England, her love for that cold-hearted Scotchman, Lord Nelvil, are accidents that move us slightly. Corinne is herself, a grand antique statue, carved by a modern hand—a pure disciple of the ancient hetairæ, an Aspasia of the nineteenth century, born to rule men and men's hearts, yet dying, like Sappho, of a love contemned. A tale like this must needs be told like a poem, with the free, vigorous style, the noble digressions, the splendid flights, which Madame de Staël loved. Without effort, she placed it at once amongst the greatest works of fiction in the French language. Indeed, it stands alone of its kind, beyond the range of imitation.

Its faults, as well as its merits, give it that solitary pre-eminence. If its incidents sometimes recall those of other novels, it is like no other tale as a whole. It has the unity, the singleness of a fine poem, and in none of her works has Madame de Staël so often approached poetical inspiration as in this. Corinne's address to Italy—her proud lament over the fallen glories of that land, where the "shadows of Dante have a stronger life than the living of to-day"—her improvisation at Cape Misenum, where the eternal beauty of nature smiles at the wreck of man's power and pride—the pathetic exclamation, so harmonious in the original: "Oh, earth! bathed with blood and tears, thou hast never ceased to bear flowers and fruit! Art thou then pitiless to man, and does his dust return to thy maternal bosom, and not make it thrill?"—are passages both celebrated and familiar to all the readers of that fine book. Byron, who knew where to find and whence to borrow imaginative beauty, had read "Corinne" to some purpose, when he wrote that magnificent address to the ocean which closes the fourth canto of "Childe Harold." The splendour of expression is on the side of the poet, but the ideas and images which it clothed are to be found in a careless passage of "Corinne." Speaking of a church in Ancona which overlooks "that magnificent sea

on which man can never imprint his track," Madame de Staël adds, "Earth he tills, his roads cleave the mountains, for him rivers narrow into canals, but if vessels furrow the waters for a moment, the wave at once effaces that slight token of subjection, and the sea re-appears such as it was at the moment of creation."

We have it all, from the—

> "His steps are not upon thy paths—
> Thy fields are not a spoil for him,"

To the famous

> "Such as creation's dawn beheld—thou rollest now."

If we abstract Italy, the antiquities, the galleries, and the literary conversations of Corinne and her lover, the tale is easily told and understood.

Lord Edgermond marries in Italy, and has a daughter who remains in the land of her mother until she reaches her fifteenth year. From the sunshine of the south, from the love of art and song, she is then transferred to a country home in Northumberland, and to the society of her father's second wife, Lady Edgermond, the most rigid of English matrons. The dull and narrow routine of this provincial life, the cold and unceasing restrictions to which the ardent Italian girl must sub-

mit, her revolt useless but incessant, are told with considerable skill and power. On the very day of her arrival Miss Edgermond managed to outrage her stepmother's sense of decorum by quoting some Italian verses in which the word "love" occurred. The offence took place at a silent and formal English dinner-table, and the offending lines were addressed to an aged gentleman near whom the future Corinne was seated. Lady Edgermond blushes, and by rising gives the ladies the signal of retiring. Then comes a lecture, mild in form, severe in spirit. "Young ladies must not talk in company, especially must they never quote poetry with love in it; finally, Miss Edgermond must endeavour to forget that misguided Italy which she had much better have never known." The cold clouded sky of Northumberland seems to hold the same language; and Lord Edgermond himself, though he is not without sympathy for his Italian daughter, endeavours to curb her ardent temper and imagination, as gifts useless and even dangerous in her present mode of life. He assures her that, unless she complies with the quiet, formal manners of the new world she has entered, she will never be able to marry; and that moreover she will be miserable, unhappy, and censured. In short, genius and intellect are calamities in this unfortunate centre of

mediocrity. "Amongst the persons whom we saw," says Corinne, speaking later of this time of her life, "there were some who were not deficient in mind, but they smothered it as a troublesome gloom, and generally towards forty this faint, intellectual motion had grown dead with the rest."

"In birth, marriage, and death, consisted the whole history of our social circle, and these three events differed less there than elsewhere. Imagine what it was for an Italian like me to be seated at a tea-table several hours every day after dinner with my stepmother's friends, seven ladies, the most sedate in the county. Two were single ladies of fifty, timid as at fifteen, but not quite so merry. One lady would say to another: 'My dear, do you think it time to wet the tea?'

"'No, my dear,' was the answer, 'I think it too soon. The gentlemen are not coming yet.'

"'Will they stay long to-day?' said a third; 'what do you think of it, dear?'

"'I do not know,' answered the fourth. 'I think the election is to take place next week. Perhaps they will stay to talk it over.'

"'No,' put in a fifth, 'I rather think they are talking about the fox-hunt that interested them so much last week, and which is to be renewed next Monday. I think, however, dinner will soon be over.'

"'Oh! I scarcely hope so,' said a sixth, sighing."

This intellectual town, "where women drank tea, played at whist, and grew old doing the same thing, and staying in the same spot"—where "Time was sure not to miss them, for he knew where they were to be found"—was not an exaggeration when Madame de Staël wrote, whatever it may be now. An unfortunate borough in Northumberland, the name of which the author of "Corinne" had never heard, was so struck with its resemblance to that described by Corinne, that not satisfied with keeping to itself the fact of this unpleasant likeness, it loudly proclaimed to the world that it was the injured original Madame de Staël had taken the liberty of copying.

Her father's death, and the increasing despotism of Lady Edgermond, induce Corinne to break through this bondage. She is of age; she is rich and free. She departs for her native land—is thought dead in England—and assuming the name of Corinne, she becomes the most celebrated improvisatrice and poetess of Italy.

It is in that character, in Rome—borne on the triumphal car that takes her to the Capitol, there to be crowned with the wreath which Petrarch wore, and which, had he not died, would have bound Tasso's brow—that we see Corinne for the

first time. We know nothing of her past—of her youth in England—of her mixed parentage. She is all Italian then—in speech, genius, and beauty —and no character suits her so well.

This aspect of Corinne is the truest and the best, because it is that of the woman of genius. Her thoughts, her language never destroy the splendid ideal which has been placed before us. Her mind is large, deep, and penetrating; her speech is poetic and eloquent. She is an admirable instance, if such be needed, that genius alone has a right, even as genius alone has the power, to paint genius in its fulness. This intellectual supremacy is so great that we submit to it without demur. We endure the triumphal car of Corinne, even though it belongs more to heathen times than to prosaic days like ours. But Corinne is scarcely a modern woman. Attired like Domenichino's sibyl—young, handsome, and inspired —like a Greek muse, or a Delphic priestess, made for song, joy, and love—she passes before us like a glorious vision of the ancient times when neither muse nor priestess was yet a fiction. Such Madame de Staël meant her to be considered when she thus described her.

"The four white horses of Corinne's car made their way through the crowd. On that car—built after an antique model—Corinne was seated, and

young girls clad in white walked by her side. . . . She was attired like Domenichino's sibyl. An Indian shawl, twisted round her head, mingled with her beautiful black hair. Her robe was white, with a blue drapery fastened beneath her bosom. Her costume was very picturesque, though it did not differ sufficiently from the fashion to be thought affected. Her bearing was noble and modest. One could see that she was well pleased to be admired, but a feeling of shyness mingled with her joy, and seemed to deprecate her triumph, The expression of her countenance, of her eyes. of her smile, interested in her behalf, and even before a deeper feeling subdued him a first look made Lord Nelvil her friend. Her arms were dazzlingly beautiful—her figure, tall and somewhat full, like that of a Greek statue, spoke eloquently of youth and happiness. There was something inspired in her look. The natural manner with which she bowed and acknowledged the applause she received, enhanced her extraordinary situation. She gave at one and the same time the idea of a priestess of Apollo advancing towards the temple of the sun, and of a woman thoroughly unaffected in all the matters of life."

Corinne is twenty-six; she is in the prime of life, and in all the fulness of fame, when Lord Nelvil crosses her path, and destroys her happi-

piness, genius, and beauty. This young Scotch nobleman, the son of Lord Edgermond's dearest friend, was destined in youth to become Corinne's husband; but the vivacity, the southern fire, the very genius of the young girl, frightened the prudent father; and the quiet, fair-haired Lucile, her sister by Lord Edgermond's second wife, was preferred to the brilliant Italian. With none of these particulars, not even with her real name, is Lord Nelvil acquainted when he sees Corinne in Italy. His heart is laden with remorse and grief, for he attributes his father's premature death to his own guilty intrigue with a Frenchwoman whom he wished to marry. Fascinated by the beauty and the genius of Corinne, he lingers near her; but he cannot forget that a woman like her, a foreigner and a poetess, is the last wife his father would have selected for him. Weak, vacillating, and uncertain, he alternately resists or yields to a passion pregnant with sorrow and calamities. With Corinne for his guide, he visits Rome and her marvels, Naples and Venice, still perplexing himself and his mistress with scruples which satisfy neither conscience nor love.

All the genius of Corinne is exerted, and all the seductions of Italy are displayed, to keep this lover, so little worth the keeping. We have admirable conversations on Italy and Italian litera-

ture, and enchanting walks through Rome and her galleries, in the Campagna and among its ruins. The lovers wander through the gorgeous scenery of Southern Italy—on the slopes of Vesuvius, in the lonely streets of Pompeii, by the desolate shores of once luxurious Baïa—and wherever they go, the struggle between love and opinion still fills Oswald's heart. The marvellous gifts of Corinne, her devotedness, her generosity, cannot conquer his jealousy, mistrust, and ever-returning scruples. In vain Corinne makes herself his slave; her master, uneasy "to hold this queen in chains," cannot enjoy his empire in peace.

At length the Gordian knot is cut: Lord Nelvil is ordered home to join his regiment, which is to sail for the West Indies. He goes and leaves Corinne, who has his promise and his ring, and whom neither saves from her lover's inconstancy. Scarcely has he left her, when, the power and charm of her presence being gone, he grows cold. He sees Lucile, young, lovely, and pure—the wife his father wished him to take—and he cannot see her unmoved. Corinne, who has followed him—not through jealousy or mistrust, but through the folly of a love which will risk all for love's own sake—sees him with her sister, and, convinced that his heart has strayed from her, she sends back the ring that bound him, returns

to Italy, and there, no longer the brilliant, the inspired Corinne of the Capitol, but a broken-hearted woman whose great hope has been wrecked, she lingers a few years in solitude, and dies, after seeing once more and forgiving her repentant lover. He does not go unpunished. The avenging Nemesis of love has inflicted on him a dragon mother-in-law, and a stiff statue of virtue for a wife. Too heartless to be true to Corinne, he has feeling enough to be troubled with useless remorse, and especially to compare this delightful companion with the correct but insipid Lucile. In short, Lord Nelvil, after proving a faithless lover, makes a very indifferent husband.

Thus ends the tale, which, though it deals so much with love, is in reality no love-story; for, apart from even its numerous digressions, love is but little in it. Corinne absorbs us. Like the queen in a classic tragedy, she fills the scene; she even effaces her own love and its sorrows. Othello was not a lover; he was Oriental jealousy in a deceived husband's form. Werther was not a lover; he was wearied scepticism in the nineteenth century; and Corinne is not woman's love, passionate and devoted—she is genius, giving to man the adoration that should have been bestowed on art alone.

Such was not Madame de Staël's meaning. She thought as highly of love as of genius, and she wished to show the sorrows that await both when they unite in woman; but in this perilous part of her attempt she was not quite successful. It is hard to represent genius happy in, or conquered by, love. Love claims a divine equality, and genius knows no peer. It is a solitary power, that yields empire to none; and true love is all subjection. Genius can be blest in spite of its greatness; the human being sinks into happiness; but it does not follow that the mighty intellect has found its mate. Genius, happy in love, almost always amazes and mortifies us—that so little should make it blest. On the other hand, to shew genius wrecked for evermore when love is gone, is to deny its greatness. Passion does not conquer noble minds. The heart is not cold or weak, but the power to endure is great.

There is only one aspect of genius which it is easy to paint—its solitude. That we can all understand and believe in. We all feel that the poet is first in the intellectual world, as the martyr is in the religious—that, like him, he is consecrated to sorrow, endurance, and immortality; and nobler than to live a peaceful and untroubled life, does it seem to fulfil this destiny, and die.

We have this solitude of genius in "Corinne;"

but here genius is also humbled into the worship of cold mediocrity. Lord Nelvil weakens our admiration for his mistress. The charm which binds the high-souled and inspired woman does not reach us. Both she and Madame de Staël assure us that he is a sublime, angelic being; but we know him to be weak, faithless, and cold-hearted. When Corinne kneels to him, adores him, and dies for him, we are grieved at the profanation of woman's beauty, genius, and pride.

It is not because he does not marry her that Lord Nelvil is so mean. There is a cloud on her past; she leads a strange life; a man with whom the ties of family, country, and honour are strong may pause before he binds his life to hers. But the renunciation which great love might have made heroic, weak love makes paltry. He has not the strength to be true; he never really loves her. If the passion of man is brief, it is at least fervent whilst it lasts. Lord Nelvil's is neither ardent nor enduring. Selfish and timorous doubts never leave him. Mr. Edgermond reminds him that women are made for the shade, and he cannot forget the oracular words. His manner of making love is insolent; for it is not manly. He does not offer to marry her; yet he reminds her that a husband is worth a host of lovers. When he takes the desperate resolve of becoming that hus-

band, he words it doubtfully, in an exclamation: "Cruel woman! you see that twenty times a day I am ready to offer you my hand and my life," &c. Yet he is better in this mood, when he treats "Corinne" to a puritanic lecture, than when he turns fond and faints on seeing her act the part of Juliet. Cold and shy, like an Englishman, Lord Nelvil is more lachrymose than Englishmen usually are. His fine eyes are constantly filling with tears. To this melting mood he unites pedantic stiffness. Count d'Erfeuil, a flighty Frenchman, innocently asks him, in a ball-room, what he thinks of Rome. Shocked at so indecorous a question, Lord Nelvil solemnly replies: "One cannot speak seriously in a ball-room; and *you know I cannot speak otherwise.*"

Some admirable remarks and speeches he makes every now and then; but we know it is Madame de Staël who is talking all the time. When he talks on his own account he is inexorably dull. Lord Nelvil's transports and despair on parting with Corinne are not more convincing. We doubt if he ever threatened to throw himself into the canal at Venice; we do not believe that he offered to sacrifice his military honour in order to remain with Corinne. He will not marry her; why should he meet death or disgrace for her sake? The spirit of worldly prudence guides his

actions. What has passion to do in that cold heart? His rapid infidelity justifies our scepticism. It is as weak as the love that preceded it. No violent, no engrossing passion breaks the tie which bound him to Corinne. His love thaws away, but no second love enters that weak heart. Cecile is very beautiful and very calm. After the glow and inspiration of Corinne, Lord Nelvil finds a feeling of repose in looking at this half-angel, whose voice is rarely heard; but he does not love her, and he is faithless, without the only plausible excuse of inconstancy—a second passion, more ardent than the first. His remorse is vehement, and there is truth in that, for useless penitence is one of the features of moral weakness, but that it should last years and darken his old life is not likely. Surely a man so weak in love was not strong in sorrow.

Some of his inconsistencies are genuine, others are fictitious, wilful additions of the author. Corinne herself is not always true. Whenever Corinne is inspired, an Italian improvisatrice—whenever, with her harp-like lyre, she sings the fallen glories of her country—whether it be at the Capitol, in the glow of her triumph, or at Cape Misenum, seated midst ruins, with the rising moon lighting the vast and melancholy bay—she is true, at least, to the marvellous ideal we have received;

and Italy is so poetic a country that, the genius of Corinne being granted, she is more credible there than elsewhere.

But there are two Corinnes, and, save in a few eloquent scenes of grief and passion, the woman often belies the poetess. Corinne has not the reserve of experience, but she has its mistrust. She is free in telling her love, but not certain that it will endure. On Lord Nelvil's first hint of passion, she replies: "Let us leave to time, let us leave to chance, to decide if that impression of a day will last more than a day. If our souls understand one another, our mutual affection will not be transient." This is the language of a worldly woman, not of a woman who can die of love.

This contradiction between what we are told, that she is indeed what she often seems, and what her language and actions prove her to be, is constant and irritating. She is natural, the child of impulse, a simple, trusting woman. Yet vanity and wilfulness mark her love. Lord Nelvil charms her because he is cold, unknown, and mysterious; because, though not hard to win, he is hard to keep. It is a love of the imagination, a French love of the world, not a burning Italian passion. A cold love, uselessly risking honour and reputation, but full of sceptical doubts of its own immortality. These two lovers are indeed

very unloverlike. They represent propriety arrayed against genius. We know it, and unfortunately they know it too. Conscious that they are antagonistic principles, they feel that they have met but to suffer and part. Love with them is no divine, eternal union of life, soul and heart. They can love, nor think that they love for ever. They have not even the illusions of mere passion, the fallen angel which, while it lasts, at least wears the very aspect of true love.

But if even genius cannot always reconcile glaring inconsistencies, it rarely wants the dangerous power of making them attractive. And the greatest inconsistency of all, the broken-hearted end of Corinne, is turned into the noble and sorrowful teaching that the mortal is but the preparation for the immortal; that happiness and sorrow alike are only means to reach the great end. That severing from all human ties, that bitter struggle between love and faith, cost Corinne her life. She conquers, but she dies; and when the victory is won, all is over.

"Fermossi al fin il cor che balzo tanto!"

She lingers long enough to see her life consumed by that intellectual activity which once fed it. Grief has prevailed over genius, and, amazed at the wreck of gifts once so splendid, Corinne

pities herself as a stranger might. The very consciousness of beauty and endowments that could not win love, is only painful and irritating when beauty and all that enhanced it once are faded.

She has been decaying slowly for years. When Lord Nelvil, who is in Italy with his wife and daughter, asks to see her, Corinne refuses with mingled bitterness and dignity of injured love. She taxes Lord Nelvil with having deceived her, "willingly or not, what matter? He was not the man I believed him to be. For a year he enjoyed the feeling with which he had inspired me; but when he was required to defend me, when deeds were to prove his heart, he did nothing. Can he boast of a sacrifice, of a generous impulse? He is happy now; he enjoys all that the world esteems. I am dying; let him leave me in peace!"

Yet they meet in her last moments—against her wish, it is true; and when Corinne is borne back from Florence, where she dies, to Rome, the city of her triumph, Lord Nelvil accompanies her. He follows her funereal train along the streets through which her triumphal car once had passed. His grief, we are told, is extreme; life and reason nearly forsake him—yet he recovers, to lead an exemplary domestic life. "But did

he forgive himself—his past conduct?" asks the author; "was he satisfied with a common lot after what he had lost? I know not, and in this respect I wish neither to blame nor absolve him." Let it be. Corinne, Lord Nelvil, are mere shadows; we need not quarrel with them. One is genius, the other is love — the chastiser of its errors. Corinne herself has told us so:—"He is the angel with the flaming sword, placed by God at the gates of paradise."

We can have but a weak impression now of the sensation "Corinne" produced on its appearance. It was an event of European interest —and not without cause, for a great mind had spoken. In Edinburgh, despite the war, "Corinne" received her welcome. Madame de Saussure, whose son was then studying in Scotland, mentions how the learned and scientific men of the modern Athens used to stop in the streets to talk of the new novel.

But "Corinne" was more than a novel, as Madame de Staël was more than a novelist. We have seen her but under one aspect of her literary career, and it had many. The eloquent critic, the acute thinker, the clear though dogmatic politician, would show us another Madame de Staël, far more wonderful than the novelist. It is that one who is world-known, and who has

made the great fame of the other. "Delphine," "Corinne," are but the gentle aspect of that great and powerful mind which would not depart without having told us what it thought of love and woman.

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